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STORIES
OF A LIFETIME

VOLUME ONE

Thomas Mann



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IT WAS the nurse's fault. When they first suspected, Frau Consul Friedemann had spoken to her very gravely about the need of controlling her weakness. But what good did that do? Or the glass of red wine which she got daily besides the beer which was needed for the milk? For they suddenly discovered that she even sank so low as to drink the methylated spirit which was kept for the spirit lamp. Before they could send her away and get someone to take her place, the mischief was done. One day the mother and sisters came home to find that little Johannes, then about a month old, had fallen from the couch and lay on the floor, uttering an appallingly faint little cry, while the nurse stood beside him quite stupefied.

The doctor came and with firm, gentle hands tested the little creature's contracted and twitching limbs. He made a very serious face. The three girls stood sobbing in a corner and the Frau Consul in the anguish of her heart prayed aloud.

The poor mother, just before the child's birth, had already suffered a crushing blow: her husband, the Dutch Consul, had been snatched away from her by sudden and violent illness, and now she was too broken to cherish any hope that little Johannes would be spared to her. But by the second day the doctor had given her hand an encouraging squeeze and told her that all immediate danger was over. There was no longer any sign that the brain was affected. The facial expression was altered, it had lost the fixed and staring look. . . . Of course, they must see how things went on—and hope for the best, hope for the best.

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The grey gabled house in which Johannes Friedemann grew up stood by the north gate of the little old commercial city. The front door led into a large flag-paved entry, out of which a stair with a white wooden balustrade led up into the second storey. The faded wall-paper in the living-room had a landscape pattern, and straight-backed chairs and sofas in dark-red plush stood round the heavy mahogany table.

Often in his childhood Johannes sat here at the window, which always had a fine showing of flowers, on a small footstool at his mother's feet, listening to some fairy-tale she told him, gazing at her smooth grey head, her mild and gentle face, and breathing in the faint scent she exhaled. She showed him the picture of his father, a kindly man with grey side-whiskers—he was now in heaven, she said, and awaiting them there.

Behind the house was a small garden where in summer they spent much of their time, despite the smell of burnt sugar which came over from the refinery close by. There was a gnarled old walnut tree in whose shade little Johannes would sit, on a low wooden stool, cracking walnuts, while Frau Friedemann and her three daughters, now grown women, took refuge from the sun under a grey canvas tent. The mother's gaze often strayed from her embroidery to look with sad and loving eyes at her child.

He was not beautiful, little Johannes, as he crouched on his stool industriously cracking his nuts. In fact, he was a strange sight, with his pigeon breast, humped back, and disproportionately long arms. But his hands and feet were delicately formed, he had soft red-brown eyes like a doe's, a sensitive mouth, and fine, light-brown hair. His head, had it not sat so deep between his shoulders, might almost have been called pretty.

When he was seven he went to school, where time passed swiftly and uniformly. He walked every day, with the strut deformed people often have, past the quaint gabled houses and shops to the old schoolhouse with the vaulted arcades. When he had done his preparation he would read in his books with the lovely title-page illustrations in colour, or else work in the garden, while his sisters kept house for their invalid mother. They went out too, for they belonged to the best society of the town; but unfortunately they had not married, for they had not much money nor any looks

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to recommend them.

Johannes too was now and then invited out by his schoolmates, but it is not likely that he enjoyed it. He could not take part in their games, and they were always embarrassed in his company, so there was no feeling of good fellowship.

There came a time when he began to hear certain matters talked about, in the courtyard at school. He listened wide-eyed and large-eared, quite silent, to his companions' raving over this or that little girl. Such things, though they entirely engrossed the attention of these others, were not, he felt, for him; they belonged in the same category as the ball games and gymnastics. At times he felt a little sad. But at length he had become quite used to standing on one side and not taking part.

But after all it came about—when he was sixteen—that he felt suddenly drawn to a girl of his own age. She was the sister of a classmate of his, a blond, hilarious hoyden, and he met her when calling at her brother's house. He felt strangely embarrassed in her neighbourhood; she too was embarrassed and treated him with such artificial cordiality that it made him sad.

One summer afternoon as he was walking by himself on the wall outside the town, he heard a whispering behind a jasmine bush and peeped cautiously through the branches. There she sat on a bench beside a long-legged, red-haired youth of his acquaintance. They had their arms about each other and he was imprinting on her lips a kiss, which she returned amid giggles. Johannes looked, turned round, and went softly away.

His head was sunk deeper than ever between his shoulders, his hands trembled, and a sharp pain shot upwards from his chest to his throat. But he choked it down, straightening himself as well as he could. "Good," said he to himself. "That is over. Never again will I let myself in for any of it. To the others it brings joy and happiness, for me it can only mean sadness and pain. I am done with it. For me that is all over. Never again."

The resolution did him good. He had renounced, renounced for ever. He went home, took up a book, or else played on his violin, which despite his deformed chest he had learned to do.

At seventeen Johannes left school to go into business, like everybody else he knew. He was apprenticed to the big lumber

firm of Herr Schlievogt down on the river-bank. They were kind and considerate, he on his side was responsive and friendly, time passed with peaceful regularity. But in his twenty-first year his mother died, after a lingering illness.

This was a sore blow for Johannes Friedemann, and the pain of it endured. He cherished this grief, he gave himself up to it as one gives oneself to a great joy, he fed it with a thousand childhood memories; it was the first important event in his life and he made the most of it.

Is not life in and for itself a good, regardless of whether we may call its content "happiness"? Johannes Friedemann felt that it was so, and he loved life. He, who had renounced the greatest joy it can bring us, taught himself with infinite, incredible care to take pleasure in what it had still to offer. A walk in the springtime in the parks surrounding the town; the fragrance of a flower; the song of a bird—might not one feel grateful for such things as these?

And that we need to be taught how to enjoy, yes, that our education is always and only equal to our capacity for enjoyment—he knew that too, and he trained himself. Music he loved, and attended all the concerts that were given in the town. He came to play the violin not so badly himself, no matter what a figure of fun he made when he did it; and took delight in every beautiful soft tone he succeeded in producing. Also, by much reading he came in time to possess a literary taste the like of which did not exist in the place. He kept up with the new books, even the foreign ones; he knew how to savour the seductive rhythm of a lyric or the ultimate flavour of a subtly told tale—yes, one might almost call him a connoisseur.

He learned to understand that to everything belongs its own enjoyment and that it is absurd to distinguish between an experience which is "happy" and one which is not. With a right good will he accepted each emotion as it came, each mood, whether sad or gay. Even he cherished the unfulfilled desires, the longings. He loved them for their own sakes and told himself that with fulfilment the best of them would be past. The vague, sweet, painful yearning and hope of quiet spring evenings—are they not richer in joy than all the fruition the summer can bring? Yes, he was a connoisseur, our little Herr Friedemann.

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But of course they did not know that, the people whom he met on the street, who bowed to him with the kindly, compassionate air he knew so well. They could not know that this unhappy cripple, strutting comically along in his light overcoat and shiny top hat—strange to say, he was a little vain—they could not know how tenderly he loved the mild flow of his life, charged with no great emotions, it is true, but full of a quiet and tranquil happiness which was his own creation.

But Herr Friedemann's great preference, his real passion, was for the theatre. He possessed a dramatic sense which was unusually strong; at a telling theatrical effect or the catastrophe of a tragedy his whole small frame would shake with emotion. He had his regular scat in the first row of boxes at the opera-house; was an assiduous frequenter and often took his sisters with him. Since their mother's death they kept house for their brother in the old home which they all owned together.

It was a pity they were unmarried still; but with the decline of hope had come resignation—Friederike, the eldest, was seventeen years further on than Herr Friedemann. She and her sister Henriette were over-tall and thin, whereas Pfiffi, the youngest, was too short and stout. She had a funny way, too, of shaking herself as she talked, and water came in the corners of her mouth.

Little Herr Friedemann did not trouble himself overmuch about his three sisters. But they stuck together loyally and were always of one mind. Whenever an engagement was announced in their circle they with one voice said how very gratifying that was.

Their brother continued to live with them even after he became independent, as he did by leaving Herr Schlievogt's firm and going into business for himself, in an agency of sorts, which was no great tax on his time. His offices were in a couple of rooms on the ground floor of the house so that at mealtimes he had but the pair of stairs to mount—for he suffered now and then from asthma.

His thirtieth birthday fell on a fine warm June day, and after dinner he sat out in the grey canvas tent, with a new head-rest embroidered by Henriette. He had a good cigar in his mouth and a good book in his hand. But sometimes he would put the latter down to listen to the sparrows chirping blithely in the old nut tree and look at the clean gravel path leading up to the house

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between lawns bright with summer flowers.

Little Herr Friedemann wore no beard, and his face had scarcely changed at all, save that the features were slightly sharper. He wore his fine light-brown hair parted on one side.

Once, as he let the book fall on his knee and looked up into the sunny blue sky, he said to himself: "Well, so that is thirty years. Perhaps there may be ten or even twenty more, God knows. They will mount up without a sound or a stir and pass by like those that are gone; and I look forward to them with peace in my heart."

Now, it happened in July of the same year that a new appointment to the office of District Commandant had set the whole town talking. The stout and jolly gentleman who had for many years occupied the post had been very popular in social circles and they saw him go with great regret. It was in compliance with goodness knows what regulations that Herr von Rinnlingen and no other was sent hither from the capital.

In any case the exchange was not such a bad one. The new Commandant was married but childless. He rented a spacious villa in the southern suburbs of the city and seemed to intend to set up an establishment. There was a report that he was very rich—which received confirmation in the fact that he brought with him four servants, five riding and carriage horses, a landau and a light hunting-cart.

Soon after their arrival the husband and wife left cards on all the best society, and their names were on every tongue. But it was not Herr von Rinnlingen, it was his wife who was the centre of interest. All the men were dazed, for the moment too dazed to pass judgment; but their wives were quite prompt and definite in the view that Gerda von Rinnlingen was not their sort.

"Of course, she comes from the metropolis, her ways would naturally be different," Frau Hagenström, the lawyer's wife, said, in conversation with Henriette Friedemann. "She smokes, and she rides. That is of course. But it is her manners—they are not only free, they are positively brusque, or even worse. You see, no one could call her ugly, one might even say she is pretty; but she has not a trace of feminine charm in her looks or gestures or her laugh—they completely lack everything that makes a man fall in love with a woman. She is not a flirt—and goodness knows I would be

the last to disparage her for that. But it is strange to see so young a woman—she is only twenty-four—so entirely wanting in natural charm. I am not expressing myself very well, my dear, but I know what I mean. All the men are simply bewildered. In a few weeks, you will see, they will be disgusted."

"Well," Fräulein Friedemann said, "she certainly has everything she wants."

"Yes," cried Frau Hagenström, "look at her husband! And how does she treat him? You ought to see it—you will see it! I would be the first to approve of a married woman behaving with a certain reserve towards the other sex. But how does she behave to her own husband? She has a way of fixing him with an ice-cold stare and saying 'My dear friend!' with a pitying expression that drives me mad. For when you look at him—upright, correct, gallant, a brilliant officer and a splendidly preserved man of forty! They have been married four years, my dear."

Herr Friedemann was first vouchsafed a glimpse of Frau von Rinnlingen in the main street of the town, among all the rows of shops, at midday, when he was coming from the Bourse, where he had done a little bidding.

He was strolling along beside Herr Stephens, looking tiny and important, as usual. Herr Stephens was in the wholesale trade, a huge stocky man with round side-whiskers and bushy eyebrows. Both of them wore top hats; their overcoats were unbuttoned on account of the heat. They tapped their canes along the pavement and talked of the political situation; but half-way down the street Stephens suddenly said:

"Deuce take it if there isn't the Rinnlingen driving along."

"Good," answered Herr Friedemann in his high, rather sharp voice, looking expectantly ahead. "Because I have never yet set eyes on her. And here we have the yellow cart we hear so much about."

It was in fact the hunting-cart which Frau von Rinnlingen was herself driving today with a pair of thoroughbreds; a groom sat behind her, with folded arms. She wore a loose beige coat and skirt and a small round straw hat with a brown leather band, beneath which her well-waved red-blond hair, a good, thick crop, was drawn into a knot at the nape of her neck. Her face was oval, with

a dead-white skin and faint bluish shadows lurking under the close-set eyes. Her nose was short but well-shaped, with a becoming little saddle of freckles; whether her mouth was as good or not could not be told, for she kept it in continual motion, sucking the lower and biting the upper lip.

Herr Stephens, as the cart came abreast of them, greeted her with a great show of deference; little Herr Friedemann lifted his hat too and looked at her with wide-eyed attention. She lowered her whip, nodded slightly, and drove slowly past, looking at the houses and shop-windows.

After a few paces Herr Stephens said:

"She has been taking a drive and was on her way home."

Little Herr Friedemann made no answer, but stared before him at the pavement. Presently he started, looked at his companion, and asked: "What did you say?"

And Herr Stephens repeated his acute remark.

Three days after that Johannes Friedemann came home at mid-day from his usual walk. Dinner was at half past twelve, and he would spend the interval in his office at the right of the entrance door. But the maid came across the entry and told him that there were visitors.

"In my office?" he asked.

"No, upstairs with the mistresses."

"Who are they?"

"Herr and Frau Colonel von Rinnlingen."

"Ah," said Johannes Friedemann. "Then I will—"

And he mounted the stairs. He crossed the lobby and laid his hand on the knob of the high white door leading into the "landscape room". And then he drew back, turned round, and slowly returned as he had come. And spoke to himself, for there was no one else there, and said: "No, better not."

He went into his office, sat down at his desk, and took up the paper. But after a little he dropped it again and sat looking to one side out of the window. Thus he sat until the maid came to say that luncheon was ready; then he went up into the dining-room where his sisters were already waiting, and sat down in his chair, in which there were three music-books.

As she ladled the soup Henriette said:

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"Johannes, do you know who were here?"

"Well?" he asked.

"The new Commandant and his wife."

"Indeed? That was friendly of them."

"Yes," said Pfffi, a little water coming in the corners of her mouth. "I found them both very agreeable."

"And we must lose no time in returning the call," said Friederike.

"I suggest that we go next Sunday, the day after tomorrow."

"Sunday," Henriette and Pfffi said.

"You will go with us, Johannes?" asked Friederike.

"Of course he will," said Pfffi, and gave herself a little shake. Herr Friedemann had not heard her at all; he was eating his soup, with a hushed and troubled air. It was as though he were listening to some strange noise he heard.

Next evening *Lohengrin* was being given at the opera, and everybody in society was present. The small auditorium was crowded, humming with voices and smelling of gas and perfumery. And every eye-glass in the stalls was directed towards box thirteen, next to the stage; for this was the first appearance of Herr and Frau von Rinnlingen and one could give them a good looking-over.

When little Herr Friedemann, in flawless dress clothes and glistening white pigeon-breasted shirt-front, entered his box, which was number thirteen, he started back at the door, making a gesture with his hand towards his brow. His nostrils dilated feverishly. Then he took his seat, which was next to Frau von Rinnlingen's.

She contemplated him for a little while, with her under lip stuck out; then she turned to exchange a few words with her husband, a tall, broad-shouldered gentleman with a brown, good-natured face and turned-up moustaches.

When the overture began and Frau von Rinnlingen leaned over the balustrade Herr Friedemann gave her a quick, searching side glance. She wore a light-coloured evening frock, the only one in the theatre which was slightly low in the neck. Her sleeves were full and her white gloves came up to her elbows. Her figure was statelier than it had looked under the loose coat; her full bosom slowly rose and fell and the knot of red-blond hair hung low and heavy at the nape of her neck.

Herr Friedemann was pale, much paler than usual, and little

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beads of perspiration stood on his brow beneath the smoothly parted brown hair. He could see Frau von Rinnlingen's left arm, which lay upon the balustrade. She had taken off her glove and the rounded, dead-white arm and ringless hand, both of them shot with pale blue veins, were directly under his eye—he could not help seeing them.

The fiddles sang, the trombones clashed, Telramund was slain, general jubilation reigned in the orchestra, and little Herr Friedemann sat there motionless and pallid, his head drawn in between his shoulders, his forefinger to his lips and one hand thrust into the opening of his waistcoat.

As the curtain fell, Frau von Rinnlingen got up to leave the box with her husband. Johannes Friedemann saw her without looking, wiped his handkerchief across his brow, then rose suddenly and went as far as the door into the foyer, where he turned, came back to his chair, and sat down in the same posture as before.

When the bell rang and his neighbours re-entered the box he felt Frau von Rinnlingen's eyes upon him, so that finally against his will he raised his head. As their eyes met, hers did not swerve aside; she continued to gaze without embarrassment until he himself, deeply humiliated, was forced to look away. He turned a shade paler and felt a strange, sweet pang of anger and scorn. The music began again.

Towards the end of the act Frau von Rinnlingen chanced to drop her fan; it fell at Herr Friedemann's feet. They both stooped at the same time, but she reached it first and gave a little mocking smile as she said: "Thank you."

Their heads were quite close together and just for a second he got the warm scent of her breast. His face was drawn, his whole body twitched, and his heart thumped so horribly that he lost his breath. He sat without moving for half a minute, then he pushed back his chair, got up quietly, and went out.

He crossed the lobby, pursued by the music; got his top hat from the cloak-room, his light overcoat and his stick, went down the stairs and out of doors.

It was a warm, still evening. In the gas-lit street the gabled houses towered towards a sky where stars were softly beaming. The pavement echoed the steps of a few passers-by. Someone spoke to him, but he heard and saw nothing; his head was bowed and

his deformed chest shook with the violence of his breathing. Now and then he murmured to himself :

"My God, my God !"

He was gazing horror-struck within himself, beholding the havoc which had been wrought with his tenderly cherished, scrupulously managed feelings. Suddenly he was quite overpowered by the strength of his tortured longing. Giddy and drunken he leaned against a lamp-post and his quivering lips uttered the one word : "Gerda !"

The stillness was complete. Far and wide not a soul was to be seen. Little Herr Friedemann pulled himself together and went on, up the street in which the opera-house stood and which ran steeply down to the river, then along the main street northwards to his home.

How she had looked at him ! She had forced him, actually, to cast down his eyes ! She had humiliated him with her glance. But was she not a woman and he a man ? And those strange brown eyes of hers —had they not positively glittered with unholy joy ?

Again he felt the same surge of sensual, impotent hatred mount up in him ; then he relived the moment when her head had touched his, when he had breathed in the fragrance of her body—and for the second time he halted, bent his deformed torso backwards, drew in the air through clenched teeth, and murmured helplessly, desperately, uncontrollably :

"My God, my God !"

Then went on again, slowly, mechanically, through the heavy evening air, through the empty echoing streets until he stood before his own house. He paused a minute in the entry, breathing the cool, dank inside air ; then he went into his office.

He sat down at his desk by the open window and stared straight ahead of him at a large yellow rose which somebody had set there in a glass of water. He took it up and smelt it with his eyes closed, then put it down with a gesture of weary sadness. No, no. That was all over. What was even that fragrance to him now ? What any of all those things that up to now had been the well-springs of his joy ?

He turned away and gazed into the quiet street. At intervals steps passed and the sound died away. The stars stood still and glittered. He felt so weak, so utterly tired to death. His head was

quite vacant, and suddenly his despair began to melt into a gentle, pervading melancholy. A few lines of a poem flickered through his head, he heard the *Lohengrin* music in his ears, he saw Frau von Rinnlingen's face and her round white arm on the red velvet—then he fell into a heavy fever-burdened sleep.

Often he was near waking, but feared to do so and managed to sink back into forgetfulness again. But when it had grown quite light, he opened his eyes and looked round him with a wide and painful gaze. He remembered everything, it was as though the anguish had never been intermitted by sleep.

His head was heavy and his eyes burned. But when he had washed up and bathed his head with cologne he felt better and sat down in his place by the still open window. It was early, perhaps only five o'clock. Now and then a baker's boy passed; otherwise there was no one to be seen. In the opposite house the blinds were down. But birds were twittering and the sky was luminously blue. A wonderfully beautiful Sunday morning.

A feeling of comfort and confidence came over little Herr Friedemann. Why had he been distressing himself? Was not everything just as it had been? The attack of yesterday had been a bad one. Granted. But it should be the last. It was not too late, he could still escape destruction. He must avoid every occasion of a fresh seizure, he felt sure he could do this. He felt the strength to conquer and suppress his weakness.

It struck half past seven and Friederike came in with the coffee, setting it on the round table in front of the leather sofa against the rear wall.

"Good morning, Johannes," said she; "here is your breakfast."

"Thanks," said little Herr Friedemann. And then: "Dear Friederike, I am sorry, but you will have to pay your call without me, I do not feel well enough to go. I have slept badly and have a headache—in short, I must ask you—"

"What a pity!" answered Friederike. "You must go another time. But you do look ill. Shall I lend you my menthol pencil?"

"Thanks," said Herr Friedemann. "It will pass." And Friederike went out.

Standing at the table he slowly drank his coffee and ate a croissant. He felt satisfied with himself and proud of his firmness. When

he had finished he sat down again by the open window, with a cigar. The food had done him good and he felt happy and hopeful. He took a book and sat reading and smoking and blinking into the sunlight.

Morning had fully come, wagons rattled past, there were many voices and the sound of the bells on passing trams. With and among it all was woven the twittering and chirping; there was a radiant blue sky, a soft mild air.

At ten o'clock he heard his sisters cross the entry; the front door creaked, and he idly noticed that they passed his window. An hour went by. He felt more and more happy.

A sort of hubris mounted in him. What a heavenly air—and how the birds were singing! He felt like taking a little walk. Then suddenly, without any transition, yet accompanied by a terror namelessly sweet came the thought: "Suppose I were to go to her!" And suppressing, as though by actual muscular effort, every warning voice within him, he added with blissful resolution: "I will go to her!"

He changed into his Sunday clothes, took his top hat and his stick, and hurried with quickened breath through the town and into the southern suburbs. Without looking at a soul he kept raising and dropping his head with each eager step, completely rapt in his exalted state until he arrived at the avenue of chestnut trees and the red brick villa with the name of Commandant von Rinnlingen on the gate-post.

But here he was seized by a tremor, his heart throbbed and pounded in his breast. He went across the vestibule and rang at the inside door. The die was cast, there was no retreating now. "Come what come may," thought he, and felt the stillness of death within him.

The door suddenly opened and the maid came towards him across the vestibule; she took his card and hurried away up the red-carpeted stair. Herr Friedemann gazed fixedly at the bright colour until she came back and said that her mistress would like him to come up.

He put down his stick beside the door leading into the salon and stole a look at himself in the glass. His face was pale, the eyes red, his hair was sticking to his brow, the hand that held

his top hat kept on shaking.

The maid opened the door and he went in. He found himself in a rather large, half-darkened room, with drawn curtains. At his right was a piano, and about the round table in the centre stood several arm-chairs covered in brown silk. The sofa stood along the left-hand wall, with a landscape painting in a heavy gilt frame hanging above it. The wall-paper too was dark in tone. There was an alcove filled with potted palms.

A minute passed, then Frau von Rinulingen opened the portières on the right and approached him noiselessly over the thick brown carpet. She wore a simply cut frock of red and black plaid. A ray of light, with motes dancing in it, streamed from the alcove and fell upon her heavy red hair so that it shone like gold. She kept her strange eyes fixed upon him with a searching gaze and as usual stuck out her under lip.

"Good morning, Frau Commandant," began little Herr Friedemann, and looked up at her, for he came only as high as her chest. "I wished to pay you my respects too. When my sisters did so I was unfortunately out . . . I regretted sincerely . . ."

He had no idea at all what else he should say; and there she stood and gazed ruthlessly at him as though she would force him to go on. The blood rushed to his head. "She sees through me," he thought, "she will torture and despise me. Her eyes keep flickering. . . ."

But at last she said, in a very high, clear voice:

"It is kind of you to have come. I have also been sorry not to see you before. Will you please sit down?"

She took her seat close beside him, leaned back, and put her arm along the arm of the chair. He sat bent over, holding his hat between his knees. She went on:

"Did you know that your sisters were here a quarter of an hour ago? They told me you were ill."

"Yes," he answered, "I did not feel well enough to go out, I thought I should not be able to. That is why I am late."

"You do not look very well even now," said she tranquilly, not shifting her gaze. "You are pale and your eyes are inflamed. You are not very strong, perhaps?"

"Oh," said Herr Friedemann, stammering, "I've not much to complain of, as a rule."



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"I am ailing a good deal too," she went on, still not turning her eyes from him, "but nobody notices it. I am nervous, and sometimes I have the strangest feelings."

She paused, lowered her chin to her breast, and looked up expectantly at him. He made no reply, simply sat with his dreamy gaze directed upon her. How strangely she spoke, and how her clear and thrilling voice affected him! His heart beat more quietly and he felt as though he were in a dream. She began again:

"I am not wrong in thinking that you left the opera last night before it was over?"

"Yes, madam."

"I was sorry to see that. You listened like a music-lover—though the performance was only tolerable. You are fond of music, I am sure. Do you play the piano?"

"I play the violin, a little," said Herr Friedemann. "That is, really not very much--"

"You play the violin?" she asked, and looked past him consideringly. "But we might play together," she suddenly said. "I can accompany a little. It would be a pleasure to find somebody here--would you come?"

"I am quite at your service—with pleasure," said he, stiffly. He was still as though in a dream. A pause ensued. Then suddenly her expression changed. He saw it alter for one of cruel, though hardly perceptible mockery, and again she fixed him with that same searching, uncannily flickering gaze. His face burned, he knew not where to turn; drawing his head down between his shoulders he stared confusedly at the carpet, while there shot through him once more that strangely sweet and torturing sense of impotent rage.

He made a desperate effort and raised his eyes. She was looking over his head at the door. With the utmost difficulty he fetched out a few words:

"And you are so far not too dissatisfied with your stay in our city?"

"Oh, no," said Frau Rinnlingen indifferently. "No, certainly not; why should I not be satisfied? To be sure, I feel a little hampered, as though everybody's eyes were upon me, but—oh, before I forget it," she went on quickly, "we are entertaining a few people next week, a small, informal company. A little music, perhaps, and conversation. . . . There is a charming garden at the back, it runs down

to the river. You and your sisters will be receiving an invitation in due course, but perhaps I may ask you now to give us the pleasure of your company?"

Her Friedemann was just expressing his gratitude for the invitation when the door-knob was seized energetically from without and the Commandant entered. They both rose and Frau von Rinnlingen introduced the two men to each other. Her husband bowed to them both with equal courtesy. His bronze face glistened with the heat.

He drew off his gloves, addressing Herr Friedemann in a powerful, rather sharp-edged voice. The latter looked up at him with large vacant eyes and had the feeling that he would presently be clapped benevolently on the shoulder. Heels together, inclining from the waist, the Commandant turned to his wife and asked, in a much gentler tone:

"Have you asked Herr Friedemann if he will give us the pleasure of his company at our little party, my love? If you are willing I should like to fix the date for next week and I hope that the weather will remain fine so that we can enjoy ourselves in the garden."

"Just as you say," answered Frau von Rinnlingen, and gazed past him.

Two minutes later Herr Friedemann got up to go. At the door he turned and bowed to her once more, meeting her expressionless gaze still fixed upon him.

He went away, but he did not go back to the town; unconsciously he struck into a path that led away from the avenue towards the old ruined fort by the river, among well-kept lawns and shady avenues with benches.

He walked quickly and absently, with bent head. He felt intolerably hot, as though aware of flames leaping and sinking within him, and his head throbbed with fatigue.

It was as though her gaze still rested on him—not vacantly as it had at the end, but with that flickering cruelty which went with the strange still way she spoke. Did it give her pleasure to put him beside himself, to see him helpless? Looking through and through him like that, could she not feel a little pity?

He had gone along the river-bank under the moss-grown wall; he sat down on a bench within a half-circle of blossoming jasmine.

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The sweet, heavy scent was all about him, the sun brooded upon the dimpling water.

He was weary, he was worn out; and yet within him all was tumult and anguish. Were it not better to take one last look and then to go down into that quiet water; after a brief struggle to be free and safe at peace? Ah, peace, peace—that was what he wanted! Not peace in an empty and soundless void, but a gentle, sunlit peace, full of good, of tranquil thoughts.

All his tender love of life thrilled through him in that moment, all his profound yearning for his vanished "happiness". But then he looked about him into the silent, endlessly indifferent peace of nature, saw how the river went its own way in the sun, how the grasses quivered and the flowers stood up where they blossomed, only to fade and be blown away; saw how all that was bent submissively to the will of life; and there came over him all at once that sense of acquaintance and understanding with the inevitable which can make those who know it superior to the blows of fate.

He remembered the afternoon of his thirtieth birthday and the peaceful happiness with which he, untroubled by fears or hopes, had looked forward to what was left of his life. He had seen no light and no shadow there, only a mild twilight radiance gently declining into the dark. With what a calm and superior smile had he contemplated the years still to come—how long ago was that?

Then this woman had come, she had to come, it was his fate that she should, for she herself was his fate and she alone. He had known it from the first moment. She had come—and though he had tried his best to defend his peace, her coming had roused in him all those forces which from his youth up he had sought to suppress, feeling, as he did, that they spelled torture and destruction. They had seized upon him with frightful, irresistible power and flung him to the earth.

They were his destruction, well he knew it. But why struggle, then, and why torture himself? Let everything take its course. He would go his appointed way, closing his eyes before the yawning void, bowing to his fate, bowing to the overwhelming, anguishingly sweet, irresistible power.

The water glittered, the jasmine gave out its strong, pungent scent, the birds chattered in the tree-tops that gave glimpses among them of a heavy, velvety-blue sky. Little hump-backed

Herr Friedemann sat long upon his bench; he sat bent over, holding his head in his hands.

Everybody agreed that the Rinnlingens entertained very well. Some thirty guests sat in the spacious dining-room, at the long, prettily decorated table, and the butler and two hired waiters were already handing round the ices. Dishes clattered, glasses rang, there was a warm aroma of food and perfumes. Here were comfortable merchants with their wives and daughters; most of the officers of the garrison; a few professional men, lawyers and the popular old family doctor--in short, all the best society.

A nephew of the Commandant, on a visit, a student of mathematics, sat deeply in conversation with Fräulein Hagenström, whose place was directly opposite Herr Friedemann's, at the lower end of the table. Johannes Friedemann sat there on a rich velvet cushion, beside the unbeautiful wife of the Colonial Director and not far off Frau von Rinnlingen, who had been escorted to table by Consul Stephens. It was astonishing, the change which had taken place in little Herr Friedemann in these few days. Perhaps the incandescent lighting in the room was partly to blame; but his cheeks looked sunken, he made a more crippled impression even than usual, and his inflamed eyes, with their dark rings, glowed with an inexpressibly tragic light. He drank a great deal of wine and now and then addressed a remark to his neighbour.

Frau von Rinnlingen had not so far spoken to him at all; but now she leaned over and called out :

"I have been expecting you in vain these days, you and your fiddle."

He looked vacantly at her for a while before he replied. She wore a light-coloured frock with a low neck that left the white throat bare; a Maréchal Niel rose in full bloom was fastened in her shining hair. Her cheeks were a little flushed, but the same bluish shadows lurked in the corners of her eyes.

Herr Friedemann looked at his plate and forced himself to make some sort of reply; after which the school superintendent's wife asked him if he did not love Beethoven and he had to answer that too. But at this point the Commandant, sitting at the head of the table, caught his wife's eye, tapped on his glass and said :

"Ladies and gentlemen, I suggest that we drink our coffee in the

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next room. It must be fairly decent out in the garden too, and whoever wants a little fresh air, I am for him."

Lieutenant von Deidesheim made a tactful little joke to cover the ensuing pause, and the table rose in the midst of laughter. Herr Friedemann and his partner were among the last to quit the room; he escorted her through the "old German" smoking-room to the dim and pleasant living-room, where he took his leave.

He was dressed with great care: his evening clothes were irreproachable, his shirt was dazzlingly white, his slender, well-shaped feet were encased in patent-leather pumps, which now and then betrayed the fact that he wore red silk stockings.

He looked out into the corridor and saw a good many people descending the steps into the garden. But he took up a position at the door of the smoking-room, with his cigar and coffee, where he could see into the living-room.

Some of the men stood talking in this room, and at the right of the door a little knot had formed round a small table, the centre of which was the mathematics student, who was eagerly talking. He had made the assertion that one could draw through a given point more than one parallel to a straight line; Frau Hagenström had cried that this was impossible, and he had gone on to prove it so conclusively that his hearers were constrained to behave as though they understood.

At the rear of the room, on the sofa beside the red-shaded lamp, Gerda von Rinnlingen sat in conversation with young Fräulein Stephens. She leaned back among the yellow silk cushions with one knee slung over the other, slowly smoking a cigarette, breathing out the smoke through her nose and sticking out her lower lip. Fräulein Stephens sat stiff as a graven image beside her, answering her questions with an assiduous smile.

Nobody was looking at little Herr Friedemann, so nobody saw that his large eyes were constantly directed upon Frau von Rinnlingen. He sat rather droopingly and looked at her. There was no passion in his gaze nor scarcely any pain. But there was something dull and heavy there, a dead weight of impotent, involuntary adoration.

Some ten minutes went by. Then as though she had been secretly watching him the whole time, Frau von Rinnlingen approached and paused in front of him. He got up as he heard her say:

"Would you care to go into the garden with me, Herr Friedemann?"

He answered:

"With pleasure, madam."

"You have never seen our garden?" she asked him as they went down the steps. "It is fairly large. I hope that there are not too many people in it; I should like to get a breath of fresh air. I got a headache during supper; perhaps the red wine was too strong for me. Let us go this way." They passed through a glass door, the vestibule, and a cool little courtyard, whence they gained the open air by descending a couple more steps.

The scent of all the flower-beds rose into the wonderful, warm, starry night. The garden lay in full moonlight and the guests were strolling up and down the white gravel paths, smoking and talking as they went. A group had gathered round the old fountain, where the much-loved old doctor was making them laugh by sailing paper boats.

With a little nod Frau von Rinnlingen passed them by, and pointed ahead of her, where the fragrant and well-cared-for garden blended into the darker park.

"Shall we go down this middle path?" asked she. At the beginning of it stood two low, squat obelisks.

In the vista at the end of the chestnut alley they could see the river shining green and bright in the moonlight. All about them was darkness and coolness. Here and there side paths branched off, all of them probably curving down to the river. For a long time there was not a sound.

"Down by the water," she said, "there is a pretty spot where I often sit. We could stop and talk a little. See the stars glittering here and there through the trees."

He did not answer, gazing, as they approached it, at the river's shimmering green surface. You could see the other bank and the park along the city wall. They left the alley and came out on the grassy slope down to the river, and she said:

"Here is our place, a little to the right, and there is no one there."

The bench stood facing the water, some six paces away, with its back to the trees. It was warmer here in the open. Crickets chirped among the grass, which at the river's edge gave way to sparse reeds.

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The moonlit water gave off a soft light.

For a while they both looked in silence. Then he heard her voice; it thrilled him to recognize the same low, gentle, pensive tone of a week ago, which now as then moved him so strangely :

"How long have you had your infirmity, Herr Friedemann? Were you born so?"

He swallowed before he replied, for his throat felt as though he were choking. Then he said, politely and gently :

"No, *gnädige Frau*. It comes from their having let me fall, when I was an infant."

"And how old are you now?" she asked again.

"Thirty years old."

"Thirty years old," she repeated. "And these thirty years were not happy ones?"

Little Herr Friedemann shook his head, his lips quivered.

"No," he said, "that was all lies and my imagination."

"Then you have thought that you were happy?" she asked.

"I have tried to be," he replied, and she responded :

"That was brave of you."

A minute passed. The crickets chirped and behind them the boughs rustled lightly.

"I understand a good deal about unhappiness," she told him.

"These summer nights by the water are the best thing for it."

He made no direct answer but gestured feebly across the water, at the opposite bank, lying peaceful in the darkness.

"I was sitting over there not long ago," he said.

"When you came from me?" she asked. He only nodded.

Then suddenly he started up from his seat, trembling all over; he sobbed and gave vent to a sound, a wail which yet seemed like a release from strain and sank slowly to the ground before her. He had touched her hand with his as it lay beside him on the bench, and clung to it now, seizing the other as he knelt before her, this little cripple, trembling and shuddering; he buried his face in her lap and stammered between his gasps in a voice which was scarcely human :

"You know, you understand . . . let me . . . I can no longer . . . my God, oh, my God !"

She did not repulse him, neither did she bend her face towards him. She sat erect, leaning a little away, and her close-set eyes,

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wherein the liquid shimmer of the water seemed to be mirrored, stared beyond him into space.

Then she gave him an abrupt push and uttered a short, scornful laugh. She tore her hands from his burning fingers, clutched his arm, and flung him sidewise upon the ground. Then she sprang up and vanished down the wooded avenue.

He lay there with his face in the grass, stunned, unmanned, shudders coursing swiftly through his frame. He pulled himself together, got up somehow, took two steps, and fell again, close to the water. What were his sensations at this moment? Perhaps he was feeling that same luxury of hate which he had felt before when she had humiliated him with her glance, degenerated now, when he lay before her on the ground and she had treated him like a dog, into an insane rage which must at all costs find expression even against himself—a disgust, perhaps of himself, which filled him with a thirst to destroy himself, to tear himself to pieces, to blot himself utterly out.

On his belly he dragged his body a little further, lifted its upper part, and let it fall into the water. He did not raise his head nor move his legs, which still lay on the bank.

The crickets stopped chirping a moment at the noise of the little splash. Then they went on as before, the boughs lightly rustled, and down the long alley came the faint sound of laughter.

DISILLUSIONMENT

I CONFESS that I was completely bewildered by the conversation which I had with this extraordinary man. I am afraid that I am even yet hardly in a state to report it in such a way that it will affect others as it did me. Very likely the effect was largely due to the candour and friendliness with which an entire stranger laid himself open to me.

It was some two months ago, on an autumnal afternoon, that I first noticed my stranger on the Piazza di San Marco. Only a few people were abroad; but on the wide square the standards flapped in the light sea-breeze in front of that sumptuous marvel of colour and line which stood out with luminous enchantment against a tender pale-blue sky. Directly before the centre portal a young girl stood strewing corn for a host of pigeons at her feet, while more and more swooped down in clouds from all sides. An incomparably blithe and festive sight.

I met him on the square and I have him in perfect clarity before my eye as I write. He was rather under middle height and a little stooped, walking briskly and holding his cane in his hands behind his back. He wore a stiff black hat, a light summer overcoat, and dark striped trousers. For some reason I mistook him for an Englishman. He might have been thirty years old, he might have been fifty. His face was smooth-shaven, with a thickish nose and tired grey eyes; round his mouth played constantly an inexplicable and somewhat simple smile. But from time to time he would look searchingly about him, then stare upon the ground, mutter a few words to himself, give his head a shake and fall to smiling again. In this fashion he marched perseveringly up and down the square.

After that first time I noticed him daily; for he seemed to have no other business than to pace up and down, thirty, forty, or fifty times, in good weather and bad, always alone and always with that extraordinary bearing of his.

On the evening which I mean to describe there had been a concert by a military band. I was sitting at one of the little tables which spread out into the piazza from Florian's café; and when after the concert the concourse of people had begun to disperse, my unknown, with his accustomed absent smile, sat down in a seat left vacant near me.

The evening drew on, the scene grew quieter and quieter, soon all the tables were empty. Hardly any strollers were left, the majestic square was wrapped in peace, the sky above it thick with stars; a great half-moon hung above the splendid spectacular façade of San Marco.

I had been reading my paper, with my back to my neighbour, and was about to surrender the field to him when I was obliged instead to turn in his direction. For whereas I had not heard a single sound, he now suddenly began to speak.

"You are in Venice for the first time, sir?" he asked, in bad French. When I essayed to answer in English he went on in good German, speaking in a low, husky voice and coughing often to clear it.

"You are seeing all this for the first time? Does it come up to your expectations? Surpasses them, eh? You did not picture it as finer than the reality? You mean it? You would not say so in order to seem happy and enviable? Ah!" He leaned back and looked at me, blinking rapidly with a quite inexplicable expression.

The ensuing pause lasted for some time. I did not know how to go on with this singular conversation and once more was about to depart when he hastily leaned towards me.

"Do you know, my dear sir, what disillusionment is?" he asked in low, urgent tones, both hands leaning on his stick. "Not a miscarriage in small, unimportant matters, but the great and general disappointment which everything, all of life, has in store? No, of course, you do not know. But from my youth up I have carried it about with me; it has made me lonely, unhappy, and a bit queer, I do not deny that.

"You could not, of course, understand what I mean, all at once.

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But you might; I beg of you to listen to me for a few minutes. For if it can be told at all it can be told without many words.

"I may begin by saying that I grew up in a clergyman's family, in quite a small town. There reigned in our home a punctilious cleanliness and the pathetic optimism of the scholarly atmosphere. We breathed a strange atmosphere, compact of pulpit rhetoric, of large words for good and evil, beautiful and base, which I bitterly hate, since perhaps they are to blame for all my sufferings.

"For me life consisted utterly of those large words; for I knew no more of it than the infinite, insubstantial emotions which they called up in me. From man I expected divine virtue or hair-raising wickedness; from life either ravishing loveliness or else consummate horror; and I was full of avidity for all that and of a profound, tormented yearning for a larger reality, for experience of no matter what kind, let it be glorious and intoxicating bliss or unspeakable, undreamed-of anguish.

"I remember, sir, with painful clearness the first disappointment of my life; and I would beg you to observe that it had not at all to do with the miscarriage of some cherished hope, but with an unfortunate occurrence. There was a fire at night in my parents' house, when I was hardly more than a child. It had spread insidiously until the whole small storey was in flames up to my chamber door, and the stairs would soon have been on fire as well. I discovered it first, and I remember that I went rushing through the house shouting over and over: 'Fire, fire!' I know exactly what I said and what feeling underlay the words, though at the time it could scarcely have come to the surface of my consciousness. 'So this,' I thought, 'is a fire. This is what it is like to have the house on fire. Is this all there is to it?'

"Goodness knows it was serious enough. The whole house burned down, the family was only saved with difficulty, and I got some burns. And it would be wrong to say that my fancy could have painted anything much worse than the actual burning of my parents' house. Yet some vague, formless idea of an event even more frightful must have existed somewhere within me, by comparison with which the reality seemed flat. This fire was the first great event in my life. It left me defrauded of my hope of fearfulness.

"Do not fear lest I go on to recount my disappointments to you

in detail. Enough to tell you that I zealously fed my magnificent expectations of life with the matter of a thousand books and the works of all the poets. Ah, how I have learned to hate them, those poets who chalked up their large words on all the walls of life—because they had no power to write them on the sky with pencils dipped in Vesuvius! I came to think of every large word as a lie or a mockery.

"Ecstatic poets have said that speech is poor: 'Ah, how poor are words,' so they sing. But no, sir. Speech, it seems to me, is rich, is extravagantly rich compared with the poverty and limitations of life. Pain has its limits: physical pain in unconsciousness and mental in torpor; it is not different with joy. Our human need for communication has found itself a way to create sounds which lie beyond these limits.

"Is the fault mine? Is it down my spine alone that certain words can run so as to awaken in me intuitions of sensations which do not exist?

"I went out into that supposedly so wonderful life, craving just one, one single experience which should correspond to my great expectations. God help me, I have never had it. I have roved the globe over, seen all the best-praised sights, all the works of art upon which have been lavished the most extravagant words. I have stood in front of these and said to myself: 'It is beautiful. And yet—is that all? Is it no more beautiful than that?'

"I have no sense of actualities. Perhaps that is the trouble. Once, somewhere in the world, I stood by a deep, narrow gorge in the mountains. Bare rock went up perpendicular on either side, and far below the water roared past. I looked down and thought to myself: 'What if I were to fall?' But I knew myself well enough to answer: 'If that were to happen you would say to yourself as you fell: "Now you are falling, you are actually falling. Well and what of it?"'

"You may believe me that I do not speak without experience of life. Years ago I fell in love with a girl, a charming, gentle creature, whom it would have been my joy to protect and cherish. But she loved me not, which was not surprising, and she married another. What other experience can be so painful as this? What tortures are greater than the dry agonies of baffled lust? Many a night I lay wide-eyed and wakeful; yet my greatest torture resided in the

DISILLUSIONMENT

thought: 'So this is the greatest pain we can suffer. Well, and what then—is this all?'

"Shall I go on to tell you of my happiness? For I have had my happiness as well and it too has been a disappointment. No, I need not go on; for no heaping up of bald examples can make clearer to you that it is life in general, life in its dull, uninteresting, average course which has disappointed me—disappointed, disappointed!

"What is man? asks young Werther—man, the glorious half-goat? Do not his powers fail him just where he needs them most? Whether he soars upwards in joy or sinks down in anguish, is he not always brought back to bald, cold consciousness precisely at the point where he seeks to lose himself in the fullness of the infinite?

"Often I have thought of the day when I gazed for the first time at the sea. The sea is vast, the sea is wide, my eyes roved far and wide and longed to be free. But there was the horizon. Why a horizon, when I wanted the infinite from life?

"It may be narrower, my horizon, than that of other men. I have said that I lack a sense of actualities—perhaps it is that I have too much. Perhaps I am too soon full, perhaps I am too soon done with things. Am I acquainted in too adulterated a form with both joy and pain?

"I do not believe it; and least of all do I believe in those whose views of life are based on the great words of the poets—it is all lies and poltroonery. And you may have observed, my dear sir, that there are human beings so vain and so greedy of the admiration and envy of others that they pretend to have experienced the heights of happiness but never the depths of pain?

"It is dark and you have almost ceased to listen to me; so I can the more easily confess that I too have tried to be like these men and make myself appear happy in my own and others' eyes. But it is some years since that the bubble of this vanity was pricked. Now I am alone, unhappy, and a little queer, I do not deny it.

"It is my favourite occupation to gaze at the starry heavens at night—that being the best way to turn my eyes away from earth and from life. And perhaps it may be pardoned in me that I still cling to my distant hopes? That I dream of a freer life where the actuality of my fondest anticipations is revealed to be without any

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torturing residue of disillusionment? Of a life where there are no more horizons?

"So I dream and wait for death. Ah, how well I know it already, death, that last disappointment! At my last moment I shall be saying to myself: 'So this is the great experience—well, and what of it? What is it after all?'

"But it has grown cold here on the piazza, sir—that I can still feel—ha ha! I have the honour to bid you a very good night."

THE DILETTANTE

It can all be summed up, beginning, middle, and end—yes, and fitting valediction too, perhaps—in the one word: “disgust”. The disgust which I now feel for everything and for life as a whole; the disgust that chokes me, that shatters me, that hounds me out and pulls me down, and that one day may give me strength to break the whole fantastic and ridiculous situation across my knee and finish with it once and for all. I may go on for another month or so, perhaps for six months or a year; eat and drink and fill my days somehow or other. Outwardly my life may proceed as peacefully, regularly, and mechanically as it has been doing all this winter, in frightful contrast to the process of dry rot and dissolution going on within. It would seem that the more placid, detached, and solitary a man's outer life, the more strenuous and violent his inner experiences are bound to be. It comes to the same thing: if you take care not to be a man of action, if you seek peace in solitude, you will find that life's vicissitudes fall upon you from within and it is upon that stage you must prove yourself a hero or a fool.

I have bought this new note-book in order to set down my story in it—but to what end, after all? Perhaps just to fill in the time? Out of interest in the psychological, and to soothe myself with the conviction that it all had to be? There is such consolation in the inevitable! Or perhaps in order to give myself a temporary illusion of superiority and therewith a certain indifference to fate? For even indifference, as I know full well, might be a sort of happiness.

It lies so far behind me, the little old city with its narrow,

irregular, gabled streets, its Gothic churches and fountains, its busy, solid, simple citizens, and the big patrician house, hoary with age, where I grew up!

It stood in the centre of the town and had lasted out four generations of well-to-do, respected business men and their families. The motto over the front door was "*Ora et labora*". You entered through a large flagged court, with a wooden gallery, painted white, running round it up above; and mounted the stairs to a good-sized lobby and a dark little columned hall, whence you had access, through one of the tall white-enamelled doors, to the drawing-room, where my mother sat playing the piano.

The room was dull, for thick dark-red curtains half-shrouded the windows. The white figures of gods and goddesses on the wall hangings stood out plastically from their blue background and seemed as though listening to the deep, heavy first notes of a Chopin nocturne which was her favourite piece. She always played it very slowly, as though to enjoy to the full each melancholy cadence. The piano was old and its resonance had suffered; but by using the soft pedal you could give the notes a veiled, dull silvery sound and so produce quite extraordinary effects.

I would sit on the massive, straight-backed mahogany sofa listening, and watching my mother as she played. She was small and fragile and wore as a rule a soft, pale-grey gown. Her narrow face was not beautiful, it was more like that of a quiet, gentle, dreamy child, beneath the parted, slightly waved indefinitely blond hair. Sitting at the piano, her head a little on one side, she looked like one of those touching little angels who sit in old pictures at the Madonna's feet and play on their guitars.

When I was little she often used to tell me, in her low, deprecatory voice, such fairy-tales as nobody else knew; or she would simply put her hands on my head as it lay in her lap and sit there motionless, not saying a word. Those, I think, were the happiest, peacefulest days of my life.—Her hair did not grey, she became no older; only her figure grew more fragile with the years and her face thinner, stiller, and more dreaming.

But my father was a tall, broad-shouldered gentleman, in fine black broadcloth trousers and coat, with a white waistcoat on which his gold eye-glasses dangled. He wore grey mutton-chop whiskers, with a firm round chin coming out between them,

smooth-shaven like his upper lip. Between his brows stood permanently two horizontal folds. He was a powerful man, of great influence in public affairs. I have seen men leave his presence, some with quickened breath and sparkling eyes, others quite broken and in despair. For it sometimes happened that I, and I suppose my mother and my two elder sisters as well, were witnesses at such scenes—either because our father wanted to rouse my ambitions and stimulate me to get on in the world, or else, as I have since suspected, because he needed an audience. He had a way of leaning back in his chair, with one hand thrust into the opening of his waistcoat, and looking after the favoured or the disappointed man, which even as a child led me vaguely to such a conclusion.

I sat in my corner looking at my father and mother, and it was as though I would choose between them: whether I would spend my life in deeds of power or in dreamy musing. And always in the end my eyes would rest upon my mother's quiet face.

Not that I could have been at all like her outwardly, for my occupations were for the most part quite lively and bustling. One of them I still remember, which I vastly preferred to any sort of game with my schoolmates. Even now, at thirty, I still recall it with a heightened sense of pleasure.

I owned a large and well-equipped puppet theatre, and I would shut myself in alone with it to perform the most wonderful musical dramas. My room was in the second storey and had two dark and grisly-bearded ancestral portraits hanging on the wall. I would draw the curtains and set a lamp near the theatre, for it heightened the atmosphere to have artificial light. I, as conductor, took my place directly in front of the stage, my left hand resting upon a large round pasteboard box which was the sole visible orchestral instrument.

The performers would now enter; I had drawn them myself with pen and ink, cut them out, and fitted them into little wooden blocks so that they could stand up. There were the most beautiful ladies, and gentlemen in overcoats and top hats.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen," I would say. "Everybody all right? I got here betimes, for there was still some work to do. But it is quite time for you to go to your dressing-rooms."

They went behind the stage and soon came back transfigured,

in the gayest and most beautiful costumes, to look through the peep-hole which I had cut in the curtain and see if there was a good house. The house was in fact not so bad; and I rang the bell to let myself know that the performance was about to begin, lifted my baton, and paused to enjoy the sudden stillness which my gesture evoked. Another motion called up the dull warning rumble of the drums with which the overture began—this I performed with my left hand on the top of the box. Then came in the horns, clarinets, and flutes; these I reproduced with my own voice in most inimitable fashion, and so it went on until upon a powerful crescendo the curtain rose and the play began, in a setting of gloomy forest or glittering palace hall.

I would mentally sketch out the drama beforehand and then improvise the details as I went along. The shrilling of the clarinets, the beating of the drums accompanied singing of great passion and sweetness; I chanted splendid bombastic verse with more rhyme than reason; in fact it seldom had any connected meaning, but rolled magnificently on, as I drummed with my left hand, performed both song and accompaniment with my own voice, and directed with my right hand both music and acting down to the minutest detail. The applause at the end of each act was so enthusiastic that there were repeated curtain calls, and even the conductor had sometimes to rise from his seat and bow low in pride and gratitude.

Truly, when after such a strenuous performance I put my toy theatre away, all the blood in my body seemed to have risen to my head and I was blissfully exhausted as is a great artist at the triumphant close of a production to which he has given all that is in him. Up to my thirteenth or fourteenth year this was my favourite occupation.

I recall so very little of my childhood and boyhood in the great house, where my father conducted his business on the ground floor, my mother sat dreaming in her easy-chair, and my sisters, who were two and three years older than I, bustled about in kitchen and laundry.

I am clear that I was an unusually brisk and lively lad. I was well born, I was an adept in the art of imitating my schoolmasters, I knew a thousand little play-acting tricks and had a quite superior

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use of language--so that it was not hard for me to be popular and respected among my mates. But lessons were a different matter; I was too busy taking in the attitudes and gestures of my teachers to have attention left over for what they were saying, while at home my head was too full of my verses, my theatre, and all sorts of airy trifles to be in a state to do any serious work.

"You ought to be ashamed," my father would say, the furrows in his brow getting deeper as he spoke, when I brought him my report into the drawing-room after dinner and he perused it with one hand stuck in his waistcoat. "It does not make very good reading for me and that's a fact. Will you kindly tell me what you expect will become of you? You will never get anywhere in life like this."

Which was depressing; but it did not prevent me from reading aloud to my parents and sisters after the evening meal a poem which I had written during the afternoon. My father laughed so that his pince-nez bounced about all over his waistcoat. "What sort of fool's tricks are those?" he cried again and again. But my mother drew me to her and stroked my hair. "It is not bad at all, my dear," she said. "I find there are some quite pretty lines in it."

Later on, when I was at an older stage, I taught myself a way of playing the piano. Being attracted by the black keys, I began with the F-sharp major chords, explored modulations over into other scales, and by assiduous practice arrived at a certain skill in various harmonies without time or tune, but imparting all possible expressiveness to my mystical billows of sound.

My mother said that my attack displayed a taste for piano, and she got a teacher for me. The lessons went on for six months, but I had not sufficient manual dexterity or sense of rhythm to succeed.

Well, the years passed, and despite my troubles at school I found life very jolly. In the circle of my relatives and friends I was high-spirited and popular, being amiable out of sheer pleasure in playing the amiable part; though at the same time I began instinctively to look down on all these people, finding them arid and unimaginative.

One afternoon, when I was some eighteen years old and about to enter the highest class at school, I overheard a little conversation between my parents. They were sitting together at the round table

in the sitting-room and did not see me dawdling by the window in the adjacent dining-room, staring at the pale sky above the gabled roofs. I heard my own name and slipped across to the half-open white-enamelled folding doors.

My father was leaning back in his chair with his legs crossed and the financial newspaper in one hand while with the other he slowly stroked his chin between the mutton-chops. My mother sat on the sofa with her placid face bent over her embroidery. The lamp was on the table between.

My father said: "It is my view that we ought to take him out of school and apprentice him to some good well-known firm."

"Oh!" answered my mother looking up in dismay. "Such a gifted child!"

My father was silent for a moment, meticulously brushing a speck from his coat. Then he lifted his shoulders and put out his hands, palms up. Said he:

"If you think, my love, that it takes no brains to be a business man you are much mistaken. And besides, I realize to my regret that the lad is accomplishing absolutely nothing at school. His gifts to which you refer are of the dilettante variety—though let me hasten to add that I by no means underestimate the value of that sort of thing. He can be very charming when he likes; he knows how to flatter and amuse his company, and he needs to please and be successful. Many a man has before now made a fortune with this equipment. Possessing it, and in view of his indifference to other fields of endeavour, he is not unadapted to a business career in the larger sense."

My father leaned back in some self-satisfaction, took a cigarette out of his case, and slowly lighted it.

"You are quite right," said my mother, looking about the room with a saddened face. "Only I have often thought and to some extent hoped that we might make an artist of him. I suppose it is true that no importance can be attached to his musical talent, which has remained undeveloped; but have you noticed that since he went to that art exhibition he has been doing a little drawing? It does not seem at all bad to me."

My father blew out smoke from his cigarette, sat erect, and said curtly:

"That is all stuff and nonsense. Anyhow, we can easily ask him."

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I asked myself. What indeed did I really want? The prospect of any sort of change was most welcome to me. So in the end I put on a solemn face and said that I was quite ready to leave school and become a business man. I was apprenticed to the wholesale lumber business of Herr Schlievot, down on the river-bank.

The change was only superficial, of course. I had but the most moderate interest in the lumber business; I sat in my revolving chair under the gas burner in the dark, narrow counting-room, as remote and indifferent as on the bench at school. This time I had fewer cares—that was the great difference.

Herr Schlievot was a stout man with a red face and stiff grey nautical beard; he troubled himself very little about me, being mostly in the mills, at some distance from the counting-house and yards. The clerks treated me with respect. I had social relations with but one of them, a talented and self-satisfied young man of good family whom I had known when I was at school. His name was Schilling. He made as much fun of everything in the world as I did, but he displayed a lively interest in the lumber business and every day gave utterance to his firm resolve that he would some day and somehow become a rich man.

As for me, I mechanically performed my necessary tasks and for the rest spent my time sauntering among the workmen in the yards, between the stacks of lumber, looking at the river beyond the high wooden lattice, where now and then a freight train rolled past, and thinking about some theatre or concert I had lately attended or some book which I had read.

For I read a great deal, read everything I could lay my hands on, and my capacity for impressions was great. I had an emotional grasp of each character created by an author; in each one I thought to see myself, and identified myself wholly with the atmosphere of a book—until it was the turn of a new one to have its effect upon me. I would sit in my room— with a book on my knee instead of the toy theatre to occupy me—and look up at my two ancestral portraits while I savoured the style of the book in which I was then absorbed, my brain filled with an unproductive chaos of half-thoughts and fanciful imaginings.

My sisters had married in quick succession. When I was not at the office I would often go down to the drawing-room, where my

mother sat, now almost always alone. She was a little ailing, her face had grown even more childlike and placid, and when she played Chopin to me or I showed her a new sequence of harmonies which I had discovered, she would ask me whether I was content and happy in my calling.—And there was no doubt that I was happy.

I was not much more than twenty, my choice of a career was still provisional, and the idea was not foreign to me that I need not always spend my life with Herr Schlievogt or with some bigger lumber-dealer. I knew that one day I could free myself, leave my gabled birthplace, and live somewhere more in accordance with my tastes: read good and well-written novels, attend the theatre, make a little music. Was I not happy? Did I not eat excellently well, go dressed in the best? And as in my schooldays I realized that there were poor and badly dressed boys who behaved with subservience to me and my like, so now I was stimulated by the consciousness that I belonged to the upper classes, the rich and enviable ones, born to look down with benevolent contempt upon the unlucky and dissatisfied. Why should I not be happy? Let things take their course. And there was a certain charm in the society of these relations and friends. It gave me a blithe feeling of superiority to smile at their limitations and yet to gratify my desire to please by behaving towards them with the extreme of affability. I basked in the sunshine of their somewhat puzzled approbation—puzzled because while they approved, they vaguely discerned elements of contradiction and extravagance.

A change began to take place in my father. Each day when he came to table at four o'clock the furrows on his brow seemed to have got deeper. He no longer thrust his hand imposingly between his waistcoat buttons, his bearing was depressed and self-conscious. One day he said to me:

"You are old enough now to share with me the cares which are undermining my health. And it is even my duty to acquaint you with them, to prevent you from cherishing false expectations. You know that I made considerable sacrifices to give your sisters their marriage portions. And of late the firm has lost a deal of money as well. I am an old man, and a discouraged one; I do not feel that things will change much for the better. I must ask you to realize that you will be flung upon your own resources."

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These things he said some two months before his death. One day he was found sitting in his arm-chair in the office, waxen-faced, paralysed, and unable to articulate. A week later the whole town attended his funeral.

My mother sat by the table in the drawing-room, fragile and silent, with her eyes mostly closed. My sisters and I hovered about her; she would nod and smile, but still be motionless and silent, her hands in her lap and her strange, wide, melancholy gaze directed at one of the white deities on the wall. Gentlemen in frock-coats would come in to tell her about the progress of the liquidation; she would nod and smile and shut her eyes again.

She played Chopin no more. When she passed her pale, delicate hand over her smoothly parted hair it would tremble with fatigue and weakness. Scarcely six months after my father's death she laid herself down and died, without a murmur, without one struggle for life.

So it was all over now—and what was there to hold me to the place? For good or ill, the business of the firm had been liquidated; I turned out to have fallen heir to some hundred thousand marks, enough to make me independent. I had no duties and on some ground or other had been declared unfit for service.

There was no longer any bond between me and those among whom I had grown up. Their point of view was too one-sided for me to share it, and on their side they regarded me with more and more puzzled eyes. Granted that they knew me for what I was, a perfectly useless human being—as such, indeed, did I know myself. But I was cynical and fatalistic enough to look on the bright side of what my father had called my dilettante talents, self-satisfied enough to want to enjoy life in my own way.

I drew my little competence out of the bank and almost without any formal farewell left my native town to pursue my travels.

I remember as though they were a beautiful, far-away dream those next three years, in which I surrendered myself greedily to a thousand new, rich, and varied sensations. How long ago was it that I spent a New Year's Day amid snow and ice among the monks at the top of the Simplon Pass? How long since I was sauntering across Piazza Erbe in Verona? Since I entered the Piazza di San Pietro from the Borgo San Spirito, trod for the first time

beneath the colonnades, and let my gaze stray abashed into the distances of that mammoth square? Since I looked down from Corso Vittorio Emanuele on the city of Naples, white in the brilliant light, and saw far off across the bay the charming silhouette of Capri, veiled in deep-blue haze? All that was some six years ago, hardly more.

I lived very carefully within my means, in simple lodgings or in modest pensions. But what with travelling and the difficulty of giving up all at once the good bourgeois comforts I was used to, my expenses were after all not small. I had set apart for my travels the sum of fifteen thousand marks out of my capital—but I overstepped this limit.

For the rest I fared very well among the people with whom I came into contact: disinterested and often very attractive characters, to whom of course I could not be the object of respect that I had been in my former surroundings, but from whom, on the other hand, I need not fear disapproving or questioning looks.

My social gifts sometimes made me genuinely popular—I recall for instance a scene in Pensione Minelli at Palermo, where there was a circle of French people of all ages. One evening I improvised for them “a music drama by Richard Wagner” with a lavishness of tragic gesture, recitative, and rolling harmonies, finishing amid enormous applause. An old gentleman hurried up to me; he had scarcely a hair on his head, his sparse white muttonchops straggled down across his grey tweed jacket. He seized my hands, tears in his eyes, and cried:

“But it is amazing! Amazing, my dear sir! I swear to you that not for thirty years have I been so pricelessly entertained. Permit me to thank you from the bottom of my heart. But you must, you certainly must become an actor or a musician!”

Truly, on such an occasion I felt something of the arrogance of a great painter who draws a caricature on the table-cloth to amuse his friends.—But after dinner I sat down alone in the salon and spent a sad and solitary hour trying sustained chords on the piano in an effort to express the mood evoked in me by the sight of Palermo.

Leaving Sicily, I had just touched the African coast, then gone on into Spain. In the country near Madrid, on a gloomy, rainy winter afternoon, I felt the first time the desire—and the necessity—

for a return to Germany. For aside from the fact that I began to crave a settled and regular life, I saw without any prolonged calculation that however carefully I lived I should have spent twenty thousand marks before my return.

I did not hesitate many days before setting out on the long journey through France, which was protracted to nearly six months by lengthy sojourns in this place and that. I recall with painful distinctness the summer evening of my arrival at the capital city in the centre of Germany which even before setting out on my travels I had selected as my home. Hither I had now come: a little wiser, equipped with a little experience and knowledge, and full of childish joy at the prospect of here setting up my rest and establishing—carefree, independent, and in enjoyment of my modest means—a life of quiet and contemplation.

The spot was not badly chosen. It is a city of some size, yet not so bustling as a metropolis, nor marred by a too obtrusive business life. It has some fine old squares and its atmosphere is not lacking in either elegance or vivacity. Its suburbs are charming; best of all I liked the well-laid-out promenade leading up to the Lerchenberg, a long ridge against which most of the town is built. From this point there is an extended view over houses, churches, and the river winding gently away into the distance. From some positions, and especially when the band is playing on a summer afternoon and carriages and pedestrians are moving to and fro, it recalls the Pincio.—But I will return to this promenade later on.

It would be hard to overestimate the peculiar pleasure I drew from the arrangement of the bedroom and sitting-room I had taken in a busy quarter in the centre of the city. Most of our family effects had passed into the possession of my sisters, but enough was left for my needs: adequate and even handsome furniture, my books, and my two ancestral portraits, even the old grand piano, which my mother had willed to me.

When everything had been placed and the photographs which I had acquired on my travels were hung on the walls or arranged on the heavy mahogany writing-desk and the bow-front chest of drawers, and when ensconced in my new fastness I sat down in an arm-chair by the window to survey by turns my abode within and the busy street life outside, my comfort and pleasure were no

small thing. And yet—I shall never forget the moment—besides my satisfaction and confidence something else stirred in me, a faint sense of anxiety and unrest, a faint consciousness of being on the defensive, of rousing myself against some power that threatened my peace: the slightly depressing thought that I had now for the first time left behind the temporary and provisional and exchanged it for the definite and fixed.

I will not deny that these and like sensations repeated themselves from time to time. But must they not come, now and then, those afternoon hours in which one sits and looks out into the growing twilight, perhaps into a slowly falling rain, and becomes prey to gloomy foreboding? True, my future was secure. I had entrusted the round sum of eighty thousand marks to the bank, the interest came to about six hundred marks the quarter—my God, but the times are bad!—so that I could live decently, buy books, and now and then visit the theatre or enjoy some lighter kind of diversion.

My days in fact conformed very well to the ideal which I had always had in view. I got up at about ten, breakfasted, and spent the rest of the morning at the piano or reading some book or magazine. Then I strolled up the street to my little restaurant, ate my dinner, and took a long walk, through the city streets, to a gallery, the suburbs, or the Lerchenberg. I came back and resumed the same occupations: read, played the piano, amused myself with drawings of a sort, or wrote a letter, slowly and carefully. Perhaps I attended the theatre or a concert after my evening meal; if not, I sat in a café and read the papers until bedtime. That was a good day, with a solid and gratifying content, when I had discovered a motif on the piano which seemed to me new and pleasing, or when I had carried away from a painting in the gallery or from the book I had read some fine and abiding impression.

I must say too that my programme was seriously conceived with the view of giving my days as much ideal content as possible. I ate modestly, had as a rule only one suit at a time; in short, I limited my material demands in order to be able to get a good seat at the opera or concert, to buy the latest books or visit this or that art exhibition.

But the days went by, they turned into weeks and months—of boredom? Yes, I confess it. One has not always a book at hand

which will absorb one for hours on end. I might sit all the morning at the piano and have no success with my improvisations. I would be seated at the window smoking cigarettes and feel stealing over me a distaste of all the world, myself included. I would be possessed by fear, spring up and go out of doors, there to shrug my shoulders and watch with a superior smile the business men and labourers on the street, who lacked the spiritual and material gifts which would fit them for the enjoyment of leisure.

But is a man of seven-and-twenty able seriously to believe—no matter how likely it is—that his days are now fixed and unchangeable up to the end? A span of blue sky, the twitter of a bird, some half-vanished dream of the night before—everything has power to suffuse his heart with undefined hopes and fill it with the solemn expectation of some great and nameless joy.—I dawdled from one day to the next—aimless, dreamy, occupied with this or that little thing to look forward to, even if it were only the date of a forthcoming publication, with the lively conviction that I was certainly very happy even though now and again weary of my solitude.

They were not precisely infrequent, those hours in which I was painfully conscious of my lack of contact with my kind. That I had none needs no explanation. I was not in touch with society—neither the first circles nor the second. To introduce myself as a *fêlard* among the gilded youth, I lacked means for that, God knew—and on the other hand, bohemia? But I was well brought up, I wear clean linen and a whole suit, and it does not amuse me to carry on anarchistic conversations with shabby young people at tables sticky with absinthe. In short, there was no one sphere to which I could naturally gravitate, and the chance connections I made from time to time were few, slight, and superficial—though this was largely my own fault, for I held back. I know, being insecure myself and unpleasantly aware that I could not make clear even to a drunken painter exactly who and what I was.

Besides, of course, I had given up society; I had broken with it when I took the liberty of going my own way regardless of its claims upon me. So if in order to be happy I needed "people", then I had to ask myself whether I should not have been by now busy and useful making money as a business man in a large way and becoming the object of respect and envy.

But meanwhile? The fact remained that my philosophic isolation disturbed me far too much. It refused to fit in with my conception of happiness, with the consciousness or conviction that I was happy—and from this conviction I was utterly unable to part. That I was not happy, that I was in fact unhappy—certainly that was unthinkable. And there the matter rested, until the next time came, when I found myself sitting alone, withdrawn and remote, alarmingly morose—and, in short, in an intolerable state.

But are happy people morose? I thought of my home life in the limited circle where I had moved in the pleasing consciousness of my own talents and parts, sociable, charming, my eyes bright with fun and mockery and good feeling of a rather condescending sort; viewed as a little odd and yet quite generally liked. Then I had been happy, despite Herr Schlievogt and the lumber business, whereas now —?

But some vastly interesting book would appear, a new French novel, which I would spend the money to buy and, sitting in my comfortable arm-chair, would enjoy at my leisure. Three hundred unexplored pages of charming blague and literary art! Certainly life was going as I would have it. Was I asking myself whether I was happy? Such a question is sheer rubbish, nothing else.

So ends another day, undeniably a full one, thank God! Evening is here, the curtains are drawn, the lamp burns on the writing-table, it is nearly midnight. I might go to bed, but I remain sprawled in my arm-chair with idle hands, gazing up at the ceiling in order to concentrate on the vague gnawing and boring of an indefinite ache which I know not how to dispel.

I have spent the past hours immersed in a great work of art: one of those tremendous and ruthless works of genius which rack and deafen, enrapture and shatter the reader with their decadent and dilettante splendours. My nerves still quiver, my imagination is rampant, my mind seethes with strange fancies, with moods mingled of yearning, religious fervour, triumph, and a mystical peace. And with all that the compulsion, which for ever urges them upwards and outwards, to display them, to share them, to "make something of them".

Suppose I were an artist in very truth, capable of giving utterance to my feelings in music, in verse, in sculpture—or best of all,

to be honest, in all of them at once? It is true that I can do a little of everything. For instance, I can sit at my piano in my quiet little room and express the fullness of my feelings, to my heart's content --ought that not to be enough? Of course, if I needed "people" in order to be happy, then I could understand. But supposing that I set store by success, by recognition, praise, fame, envy, love? My God, when I recall that scene at Palermo I have to admit to myself that something like that at this moment would be a great encouragement to me now!

If I am honest with myself I cannot help admitting the sophisticated and ridiculous distinction between the two kinds of happiness, inward and outward. Outward happiness--of what does it consist? There are men, the favourites of the gods, it would seem, whose happiness is genius and their genius happiness; children of light, who move easily through life with the reflection and image of the sun in their eyes; easy, charming, amiable, while all the world surrounds them with praise, admiration, envy, and love--for even envy is powerless to hate them. And they mingle in the world like children, capricious, arrogant, spoiled, friendly as the sunshine, as certain of their genius and their joy as though it were impossible things should be otherwise.

As for me, weak though I may be, I confess that I should like to be like them. Rightly or wrongly I am possessed with the feeling that I once belonged among them--but what matter? For when I am honest with myself I know that the real point is what one thinks of oneself, to what one gives oneself, to what one feels strong enough to give oneself!

Perhaps the truth is that I resigned my claim to this "outward happiness" when I withdrew myself from the demands of society and arranged my life to do without people. But of my inward satisfaction there is no doubt at all--it cannot, it must not be doubted; for I repeat, with emphasis of desperation, that happy I must and will be, for I conceive too profoundly of happiness as a virtue, as genius, refinement, charm; and of unhappiness as something ugly, mole-like, contemptible--in a word, absurd--to be able to be unhappy and still preserve my self-respect.

I could not permit myself to be unhappy, could not stand the sight of myself in such a rôle. I should have to hide in the dark like a bat or an owl and gaze with envy at the children of light.

I should have to hate them with a hatred which would be nothing but a festered love—and I should have to despise myself!

Hide in the dark! Ah, there comes to my mind all that I have been thinking and feeling these many months about my philosophic isolation—and my fit takes me again, my familiar, my too-much-feared fear! I am conscious of anger against some force which threatens me.

Certainly I found consolations, ameliorations, oblivion for the time and for another time and yet another. But my fear always returned, returned a thousand times in the course of the months and the years.

There are autumn days that are like a miracle. Summer is past, the trees are yellow and brown, all day the wind whistles round the corners, and turbid water fills all the gutters. You have come to terms with the time of year; you have come home, so to speak, to sit by the stove and let the winter go over your head. Then one morning you wake to see with unbelieving eyes a narrow strip of luminous blue shine through your bedroom curtains. You spring astonished out of bed and open the window, a tremulous wave of sunshine streams towards you, while through all the street noises you hear the blithe twitter of a bird. It is as though the fresh light atmosphere of an early October day were to breathe the ineffably sweet and spicy air which belongs to the promiscuous winds of May. It is spring—obviously, despite the calendar, a day in spring. You fling on your clothes to hurry through the streets and into the country, out under the open sky.

Now, such an unhopcd-for blessing of a day there was, some four months ago—we are now in the month of February. And on that day I saw a lovely sight. I had got up before nine, in a bright and joyful mood, possessed by vague hopes of change, of unexpected and happy events. I took the road to the Lerchenberg, mounting the right side of the hill and following along the ridge on the main road, close to the low stone parapet, in order to keep in sight all the way—it takes perhaps half an hour—the view over the slightly terraced city on the slope below, the river winding and glittering in the sun, and the green hilly landscape dim in the distance.

Hardly anyone was up here. The benches were empty, here and there among the trees a white statue looked out; a faded leaf

straggled down. Watching the bright panorama as I walked, I went on undisturbed until I had reached the end of the ridge, where my road slanted down among old chestnut trees. Then I heard the ringing of horses' hoofs and the rolling of a wagon coming on at a lively trot. It would pass me at about the middle of the descent, so I moved to one side and stood still.

It was a small, light, two-wheeled cart drawn by two large, briskly snorting, glossy light bays. A young lady of nineteen or twenty years held the reins, seated beside a dignified elderly gentleman with bushy white eyebrows and moustaches brushed up *à la russe*. A servant in plain black and silver livery adorned the seat behind.

The pace of the horses had been slowed down at the top of the descent, which seemed to have made one of them nervous; it swung out sidewise from the shaft, tucked down its head, and braced its forelegs, trembling. The old gentleman leaned over to help his companion, drawing in one rein with his elegantly gloved hand. The driving seemed to have been turned over to her only temporarily and half as a game; at least she seemed to do it with a childish air of mingled importance and inexperience. She made a vexed little motion of the head as she tried to quiet the shying and stumbling animal.

She was slender and brunette. Her hair was gathered to a firm knot in the back of her neck, but lay loose and soft on brow and temples so that I could see the single bright brown strands; atop it perched a round dark straw hat trimmed with a ribbon bow. For the rest she wore a short dark-blue jacket and a simple skirt of light-grey cloth. The brunette skin of her finely formed oval face looked freshened and rosy in the morning air; the most attractive features in it were the long, narrow eyes, whose scarcely visible iris was a shining black, above which arched brows so even that they looked as though they were drawn with a pen. The nose was perhaps a little long and the mouth might have been smaller, though the lips were clear-cut and fine. It was charming to see the gleaming white well-spaced teeth of her upper jaw, which, in her efforts to control the struggling horse, she pressed hard upon her lower lip, lifting her chin, which was almost as round as a child's.

It would not be true to say that this face possessed any striking

or exceptional beauty. What it had was youth, the charm of gaiety and freshness, polished, as it were, refined and heightened by ease, well-being, and luxurious living-conditions. Certainly those bright narrow eyes, now looking in displeasure at the refractory horse, would assume next minute their accustomed expression of happy security. The sleeves of her jacket, which were wide at the shoulders, came close round the slender wrists and she had an enchantingly dainty and elegant way of holding the reins in her slim ungloved white hands.

I stood by the edge of the path unnoted as the cart drove past, and walked slowly on when the horses quickened their pace again and took it out of sight. I felt pleasure and admiration, but at the same time a strange and poignant pain—was it envy, love, self-contempt? I did not dare to think.

The image in my mind as I write is that of a beggar, a poor wretch standing at a jeweller's window and staring at a costly jewel within. The man will not even feel any conscious desire to possess the stone, the bare idea would make him laugh at his own absurdity.

It came about quite by chance that I saw this same young lady again, only a week later, at the opera, during a performance of Gounod's *Faust*. Hardly had I entered the brightly lighted auditorium to betake myself to my seat in the stalls when I became aware of her seated at the old gentleman's side in a proscenium box on the other side of the stage. To my surprise I felt a little startled and confused, and in consequence perhaps averted my eyes, letting them rove over the other tiers and boxes. It was only when the overture had begun that I summoned resolution to look at the pair more closely.

The old gentleman wore a buttoned-up frock-coat and a black tie. He leaned back in his seat with dignified calm, one of his brown-gloved hands resting on the ledge in front of him while the other slowly stroked his beard or the close-cropped grey hair. The young girl—undoubtedly his daughter—leaned forward with lively interest, clasping her fan with both hands and resting them on the velvet upholstery of the ledge. Now and then with a quick gesture she tossed back the bright, soft brown hair from her brow and temples.

She wore a light-coloured silk blouse with a bunch of violets in

her girdle. In the bright light her narrow eyes seemed to sparkle even more than before; and the position of the lips and mouth which I had noticed proved to be habitual with her; for she constantly set her even, shining, well-spaced white teeth on her under lip and drew the chin upwards a little. This innocent little face, quite devoid of coquetry, the detached and merrily roving glance, the delicate white throat, confined only by a ribbon the colour of her blouse, the gesture with which she called the old gentleman's attention to something in the stalls, on the stage, or in a box—all this gave the impression of an unspeakably refined and charming child, though it had nothing touching about it and did not arouse any of those emotions of pity which we sometimes feel for children. It was childlike in an elevated, tempered, and superior way that rested upon a security born of physical well-being and good breeding. Her evident high spirits did not have their source in pride, but in an inward and unconscious poise.

Gounod's music, spirited and sentimental by turns, seemed not a bad accompaniment to this young lady's appearance. I listened without looking at the stage, lost in a mild and pensive mood which without the music might have been more painful than it was. But after the first act there disappeared from his place in the stalls a gentleman of between twenty-five and thirty years who presently with a very easy bow appeared in the box on which my eye was fastened. The old man put out his hand at once, the young lady gave him hers with a gay nod, and he carried it respectfully to his lips as they invited him to sit down.

I was quite ready to admit that this gentleman's shirt-front was the most incomparable I had ever had the pleasure of beholding. It was fully exposed, for the waistcoat was the narrowest of black strips; his dress coat was not fastened save by a single button which came below his middle, and it was cut out from the shoulders in a sweeping curve. A stand-up collar with turned-over points met the shirt-front beneath a wide black tie, and his studs were two large square black buttons, standing out on the admirably starched, dazzlingly white expanse of shirt, which however did not lack flexibility, for it had a pleasing little concavity in the neighbourhood of the waist and swelled out again just as pleasingly and glossily below.

Of course, this shirt-front was what took the eye; but there was

a head atop, entirely round and covered with close-cropped very blond hair and boasting such adornments as a pair of eye-glasses without rims or cord, a rather weedy, waving blond moustache, and a host of little duelling scars running up to the temple on one cheek. For the rest the gentleman was faultlessly built and moved with assurance.

In the course of the evening—for he remained in the box—I noted two attitudes characteristic of him. If the conversation languished he sat leaning jauntily back with one leg cocked over the other and his opera-glasses on his knee, bent his head and stuck out his whole mouth as far as it would go, to plunge into absorbed contemplation of his moustache, quite hypnotized, it would seem, and turning the while his head slowly to and fro. On the other hand, taken up in a conversation with the young lady, he would, to be sure, respectfully alter the position of his legs; then leaning even further back and seizing his chair with both hands, he would elevate his chin as high as possible and smile down upon his young neighbour with his mouth wide open, assuming an amiable and slightly superior air. What wonderfully happy self-confidence such a young man must rejoice in !

In all seriousness, I do not undervalue the possession. Upon none of his motions, however airily audacious, did the faintest self-consciousness ensue—he was buoyed up by his own self-respect. And why not? It was plain that he had made his way—not necessarily by pushing—and was on the straight road to a plain and profitable goal. He dwelt in the shade of good understanding with all the world and in the sunshine of general approbation. And so he sat there chatting with a young girl for whose pure and priceless charms he probably had an eye—and if he had he need feel no hesitation in asking for her hand. Certainly I have no desire to utter one contemptuous word in the direction of this young gentleman.

But as for me? I sat far off in the darkness below, sulkily observing that priceless and unobtainable young creature as she laughed and prattled happily with this unworthy male. Shut out, unregarded, disqualified, unknown, *hors ligne—déclassé*, pariah, a pitiable object even to myself !

I stopped on till the end and came on the three in the cloakroom, where they lingered a little getting their furs, chatting with this

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or that acquaintance, here a lady, there an officer. When they left, the young gentleman accompanied the young lady and her father, and I followed at a little remove through the vestibule.

It was not raining, there were a few stars in the sky, they did not take a cab. Talking easily, the three passed on ahead and I followed, timid, oppressed, tortured by my poignant, mocking, miserable feelings.—They had not far to go; not more than one turning and they stopped in front of a stately house with a plain façade, and father and daughter disappeared after a cordial leave-taking from their companion, who walked off with a brisk tread.

On the heavy, carved house-door was a plate with the name: Justizrat Rainer.

I am determined to see these notes to a finish, though my inward resistance is so great that I am tempted every minute to spring up and escape. I have dug and burrowed into this mess until I am perfectly exhausted. I am sick to death of it all.

Not quite three months since, I read in the paper that a charity bazaar was to be held in the Rathaus under the auspices of the best society in the city. I read the announcement attentively and made up my mind to go. "She will be there," I thought; "perhaps she will have a stall, and nothing can prevent my speaking to her. After all I am a man of good birth and breeding, and if I like this Fräulein Rainer I am just as well qualified as the man with the shirt-front to address her and exchange a few light words."

It was a windy, rainy afternoon when I betook myself to the Rathaus, before whose doors was a press of carriages and people. I made my way into the building, paid the entrance fee, left my hat and coat, and with some difficulty gained the broad and crowded staircase up to the first floor and so into the hall. I was greeted by a waft of heavy scent—wine, food, perfume, and pine needles—and a confused hurly-burly of laughter, talk, cries, and ringing gongs.

The immensely high and large space was gaily adorned with flags and garlands; along the walls and down the middle were the stalls, both open and closed, fantastically arrayed gentlemen acting as barkers in front of the latter and shouting at the top of their lungs. Ladies, likewise in costume, were everywhere selling flowers, embroideries, tobacco, and various refreshments. On the stage at

the upper end, decorated with potted plants, a noisy band was in action, while a compact procession of people moved slowly forward in the narrow lanes between the rows of stalls.

A little confused by the noise of the music, the barkers, and the grab-bags, I joined the procession, and in no time at all, scarcely four paces from the entrance, I found her whom I sought. She was selling wine and lemonade and wore the bright-coloured skirt, the square white head-dress and short stays of the Albanian peasant costume, her tender arms bare to the elbow. She was looking rather flushed, leaning back against her serving-table, playing with her gaudy fan and talking with a group of gentlemen round the stall. Among them I saw at the first glance a well-known face—my gentleman of the shirt-front stood beside her at the table with four fingers of each hand thrust in the side pockets of his jacket.

I pushed my way over, meaning to approach her when she was less surrounded. This was a test: we should see whether I still had in me some remnant of the blithe self-assurance and conscious ability of yore, or whether my present moroseness and pessimism were only too well justified. What was it ailed me? Why did the sight of this girl—I confess it—make my cheeks burn with the same old mingled feelings of envy, yearning, chagrin, and bitter exasperation? A little straightforwardness, in the devil's name, a little gaiety and self-confidence, as befits a talented and happy man! With nervous eagerness I summoned the apt word, the light Italian phrase with which I meant to address her.

It took some time for me to make the circuit of the hall in that slowly moving stream of people; and when once more I stood in front of her booth all the gentlemen save one had gone. He of the shirt-front still leaned against her table, discoursing blithely with the fair vendeuse. I would take the liberty of interrupting their conversation. And turning quickly, I edged myself out of the stream and stood before her stall.

What happened? Ah, nothing at all, or hardly anything. The conversation broke off, the young man stepped aside and, holding his rimless, ribbonless pince-nez with all five fingers, stared at me through them and it, while the young lady swept me with a calm and questioning gaze—from my suit down to my boots. My suit was by no means new and my boots were muddy, as I was well aware. I was hot too, and very likely my hair was ruffled. I was

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not cool, I was not unconcerned, I was not equal to the occasion. Here was I, a stranger, not one of the elect, intruding and making myself absurd; hatred and helpless hapless misery prevented me from looking at her at all, and in desperation I carried through my stout resolve by saying gruffly, with a scowl and in a hoarse voice:

"I'd like a glass of wine."

What matter whether she really did, as I thought, cast a quick mocking glance at her companion? We stood all three in silence as she gave me the wine; without raising my eyes, red and distraught with pain and fury, a wretched and ridiculous figure, I stood between the two, drank a few sips, laid the money on the table, and rushed out of the hall.

Since that moment it is all up with me; it added but little to my bitter cup when a few days later I read in the paper that Herr Justizrat Rainer had the honour to announce his daughter Anna's engagement to Herr Dr. Alfred Witznagel.

Since that moment it is all up with me. My last remaining shreds of happiness and self-confidence have been blown to the winds, I can do no more. Yes, I am unhappy; I freely admit it, I seem a lamentable and absurd figure even to myself. And that I cannot bear. I shall make an end of it. Today, or tomorrow, or some time, I will shoot myself.

My first impulse, my first instinct, was a shrewd one: I would make copy of the situation. I would contribute my pathetic sickness to swell the literature of unhappy love. But that was all folly. One does not die of an unhappy love-affair. One revels in it. It is not such a bad pose. But what is destroying me is that hope has been destroyed with the destruction of all pleasure in myself.

Was I—if I might ask the question—was I in love with this girl? Possibly. . . . But how—and why? Such love, if it existed, was a monstrosity born of a vanity which had long since become irritable and morbid, rasped into torment at sight of an unattainable prize. Love was the mere pretext, escape and hope of salvation for my feelings of envy, hatred, and self-contempt.

Yes, it was all superficial. And had not my father once called me a dilettante?

No, I had not been justified, I less than most people, in keeping aloof and ignoring society—I, who am too vain to support her

indifference or contempt, who cannot do without her and her applause. But here was not a matter of justification, rather one of necessity; and was it just my impractical dilettantism that made me useless for society? Ah, well, it was precisely my dilettantism that was killing me!

Indifference, I know, would be a sort of happiness. But I cannot be indifferent to myself, I am not in a position to look at myself with other eyes than those of "people"—and all innocent as I am, I am being destroyed by my bad conscience. But is a bad conscience ever anything but a festering vanity?

There is only one kind of unhappiness: to suffer the loss of pleasure in oneself. No longer to be pleasant to oneself—that is the worst that can happen; and I have known it for such a long time! All else is the play of life, it enriches life; any other kind of suffering can leave one perfectly satisfied with oneself, one can get on quite well with it. It is the conflict in oneself, the suffering with a bad conscience, the struggle with one's vanity—it is these make you a pitiable and disgusting spectacle.

An old acquaintance of mine turned up, a man named Schilling, in whose company I had once served society by working in Herr Schlievogt's lumber-yard. He was in the city on business and came to see me: a cynical individual with his hands in his trouser pockets, black-rimmed pince-nez, and a convincingly tolerant shoulder-shrug. He arrived one evening and said: "I am stopping for a few days." We went to a wine-house.

He met me as though I were still the happy and self-satisfied individual he had known; and in the belief that he was merely confirming my own conviction he said:

"My God, young fellow, but you have done yourself well here! Independent, eh? And you are right too, deuce take me if you aren't! Man lives but once as they say, and that's all there is to it. You are the cleverer of us two, I must say. But you were always a bit of a genius." And went on just as of yore, wholeheartedly recognizing my claims to superiority and being agreeable without suspecting for a moment that I on my side was afraid of his opinion.

I struggled desperately to retain his high opinion of me, to appear happy and self-satisfied. All in vain. I had not the backbone, the courage, or the countenance; I was languid and ill at ease, I

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betrayed my insecurity—and with astonishing quickness he grasped the situation. He had been perfectly ready to grant my superiority—but it was frightful to see how he saw through me, was first astonished, then impatient, then cooled off and betrayed his contempt and disgust with every word he spoke. He left me early and next day I received a curt note saying that after all he found he was obliged to go away.

It is a fact that everybody is much too preoccupied with himself to form a serious opinion about another person. The world displays a readiness, born of indolence, to pay a man whatever degree of respect he himself demands. Be as you will, live as you like—but be bold about it, display a good conscience and nobody will be moral enough to condemn you. But once suffer yourself to become split, forfeit your own self-esteem, betray that you despise yourself, and your view will be blindly accepted by all and sundry. As for me, I am a lost soul.

I cease to write fling the pen from me—full of disgust, full of disgust! I will make an end of it—alas, that is an attitude too heroic for a dilettante. In the end I shall go on living, eating, sleeping; I shall gradually get used to the idea that I am dull, that I cut a wretched and ridiculous figure

Good God, who would have thought, who could have thought, that such is the doom which overtakes the man born a dilettante!

TOBIAS MINDERNICKEL

ONE OF the streets running steeply up from the docks to the middle town was named Grey's Road. At about the middle of it, on the right, stood Number 47, a narrow, dingy-looking building no different from its neighbours. On the ground floor was a chandler's shop where you could buy overshoes and castor oil. Crossing the entry along a courtyard full of cats and mounting the mean and shabby, musty-smelling stair, you arrived at the upper storeys. In the first, on the left, lived a cabinet-maker; on the right a midwife. In the second, on the left a cobbler, on the right a lady who began to sing loudly whenever she heard steps on the stair. In the third on the left, nobody; but on the right a man named Mindernickel—and Tobias to boot. There was a story about this man; I tell it, because it is both puzzling and sinister, to an extraordinary degree.

Mindernickel's exterior was odd, striking, and provoking to laughter. When he took a walk, his meagre form moving up the street supported by a cane, he would be dressed in black from head to heels. He wore a shabby old-fashioned top hat with a curved brim, a frock-coat shining with age, and equally shabby trousers, fringed round the bottoms and so short that you could see the elastic sides to his boots. True, these garments were all most carefully brushed. His scrawny neck seemed longer because it rose out of a low turn-down collar. His hair had gone grey and he wore it brushed down smooth on the temples. His wide hat-brim shaded a smooth-shaven sallow face with sunken cheeks, red-rimmed eyes which were usually directed at the floor, and two deep, fretful furrows running from the nose to the drooping

corners of the mouth.

Mindernickel seldom left his house—and this for a very good reason. For whenever he appeared in the street a mob of children would collect and sally behind him, laughing, mocking, singing—“Ho, ho, Tobias!” they would cry, tugging at his coat-tails, while people came to their doors to laugh. He made no defence; glancing timidly round, with shoulders drawn up and head stuck out, he continued on his way, like a man hurrying through a driving rain without an umbrella. Even while they were laughing in his face he would bow politely and humbly to people as he passed. Further on, when the children had stopped behind and he was not known, and scarcely noted, his manner did not change. He still hurried on, still stooped, as though a thousand mocking eyes were on him. If it chanced that he lifted his timid, irresolute gaze from the ground, you would see that, strangely enough, he was not able to fix it steadily upon anyone or anything. It may sound strange, but there seemed to be missing in him the natural superiority with which the normal, perceptive individual looks out upon the phenomenal world. He seemed to measure himself against each phenomenon, and find himself wanting; his gaze shifted and fell, it grovelled before men and things.

What was the matter with this man, who was always alone and unhappy even beyond the common lot? His clothing belonged to the middle class; a certain slow gesture he had, of his hand across his chin, betrayed that he was not of the common people among whom he lived. How had fate been playing with him? God only knows. His face looked as though life had hit him between the eyes, with a scornful laugh. On the other hand, perhaps it was a question of no cruel blow but simply that he was not up to it. The painful shrinking and humility expressed in his whole figure did indeed suggest that nature had denied him the measure of strength, equilibrium, and backbone which a man requires if he is to live with his head erect.

When he had taken a turn up into the town and come back to Grey's Road, where the children welcomed him with lusty bawlings, he went into the house and up the stuffy stair into his own bare room. It had but one piece of furniture worthy the name, a solid Empire chest of drawers with brass handles, a thing of dignity and beauty. The view from the window was hopelessly cut off

by the heavy side wall of the next house; a flower-pot full of earth stood on the ledge, but there was nothing growing in it. Tobias Mindernickel went up to it sometimes and smelled at the earth. Next to this room was a dark little bedchamber. Tobias on coming in would lay hat and stick on the table, sit down on the dusty green-covered sofa, prop his chin with his hand, and stare at the floor with his eyebrows raised. He seemed to have nothing else to do.

As for Tobias Mindernickel's character, it is hard to judge of that. Some favourable light seems to be cast by the following episode. One day this strange man left his house and was pounced upon by a troop of children who followed him with laughter and jeers. One of them, a lad of ten years, tripped over another child's foot and fell so heavily to the pavement that blood burst from his nose and ran from his forehead. He lay there and wept. Tobias turned at once, went up to the lad, and began to console him in a mild and quavering voice. "You poor child," said he, "have you hurt yourself? You are bleeding—look how the blood is running down from his forehead. Yes, yes, you do look miserable, you weep because it hurts you so. I pity you. Of course, you did it yourself, but I will tie my handkerchief round your head. There, there! Now pull yourself together and get up." And actually with the words he bound his own handkerchief round the bruise and helped the lad to his feet. Then he went away. But he looked a different man. He held himself erect and stepped out firmly, drawing longer breaths under his narrow coat. His eyes looked larger and brighter, he looked squarely at people and things, while an expression of joy so strong as to be almost painful tightened the corners of his mouth.

After this for a while there was less tendency to jeer at him among the denizens of Grey's Road. But they forgot his astonishing behaviour with the lapse of time, and once more the cruel cries resounded from dozens of lusty throats behind the bent and infirm man: "Ho, ho, Tobias!"

One sunny morning at eleven o'clock Mindernickel left the house and betook himself through the town to the Lerchenberg, a long ridge which constitutes the afternoon walk of good society. Today the spring weather was so fine that even in the forenoon

there were some carriages as well as pedestrians moving about. On the main road, under a tree, stood a man with a young hound on a leash, exhibiting it for sale. It was a muscular little animal about four months old, with black ears and black rings round its eyes.

Tobias at a distance of ten paces noticed this; he stood still, rubbed his chin with his hand, and considered the man, and the hound alertly wagging its tail. He went forward, circling three times round the tree, with the crook of his stick pressed against his lips. Then he stepped up to the man, and keeping his eye fixed on the dog, he said in a low, hurried tone: "What are you asking for the dog?"

"Ten marks," answered the man.

Tobias kept still a moment, then he said with some hesitation: "Ten marks?"

"Yes," said the man.

Tobias drew a black leather purse from his pocket, took out a note for five marks, one three-mark and one two-mark piece, and quickly handed them to the man. Then he seized the leash, and two or three people who had been watching the bargain laughed to see him as he gave a quick, frightened look about him and, with his shoulders stooped, dragged away the whimpering and protesting beast. It struggled the whole of the way, bracing its forefeet and looking up pathetically in its new master's face. But Tobias pulled, in silence, with energy and succeeded in getting through the town.

An outcry arose among the urchins of Grey's Road when Tobias appeared with the dog. He lifted it in his arms, while they danced round, pulling at his coat and jeering; carried it up the stair and bore it into his own room, where he set it on the floor, still whimpering. Stooping over and patting it with kindly condescension he told it:

"There, there, little man, you need not be afraid of me; that is quite unnecessary."

He took a plate of cooked meat and potatoes out of a drawer and tossed the dog a part of it, whereat it ceased to whine and ate the food with loud relish, wagging its tail.

"And I will call you Esau," said Tobias. "Do you understand? That will be easy for you to remember." Pointing to the floor in

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front of him he said, in a tone of command :

"Esau !"

And the dog, probably in the hope of getting more to eat, did come up to him. Tobias clapped him gently on the flank and said :

"That's right, good doggy, good doggy !"

He stepped back a few paces, pointed to the floor again, and commanded :

"Esau !"

And the dog sprang to him quite blithely, wagging its tail, and licked its master's boots.

Tobias repeated the performance with unflagging zest, some twelve or fourteen times. Then the dog got tired, it wanted to rest and digest its meal. It lay down, in the sagacious and charming attitude of a hunting dog with both long, slender forelegs stretched before it, close together.

"Once more," said Tobias. "Esau !"

But Esau turned his head aside and stopped where he was.

"Esau !" Tobias's voice was raised, his tone more dictatorial still. "You've got to come, even if you are tired."

But Esau laid his head on his paws and came not at all.

"Listen to me," said Tobias, and his voice was now low and threatening, "you'd best obey or you will find out what I do when I am angry."

But the dog hardly moved his tail.

Then Mindernickel was seized by a mad and extravagant fit of anger. He clutched his black stick, lifted up Esau by the rafe of the neck, and in a frenzy of rage he beat the yelping animal, repeating over and over in a horrible, hissing voice :

"What, you do not obey me? You dare to disobey me?"

At last he flung the stick from him, set down the crying animal, and with his hands upon his back began to pace the room, his breast heaving, and flinging upon Esau an occasional proud and angry look. When this had gone on for some time, he stopped in front of the dog as it lay on its back, moving its fore-paws imploringly. He crossed his arms on his chest and spoke with a frightful hardness and coldness of look and tone—like Napoleon, when he stood before a company that had lost its standard in battle.

"May I ask you what you think of your conduct?"

And the dog, delighted at this condescension, crawled closer,

nestled against its master's leg, and looked up at him bright-eyed.

For a while Tobias gazed at the humble creature with silent contempt. Then as the touching warmth of Esau's body communicated itself to his leg he lifted Esau up.

"Well, I will have pity on you," he said. But when the good beast essayed to lick his face his voice suddenly broke with melancholy emotion. He pressed the dog passionately to his breast, his eyes filling with tears, unable to go on. Chokingly he said:

"You see, you are my only . . . my only . . ." He put Esau to bed, with great care, on the sofa, supported his own chin with his hand, and gazed at him with mild eyes, speechlessly.

Tobias Mindernickel left his room now even less often than before; he had no wish to show himself with Esau in public. He gave his whole time to the dog, from morning to night; feeding him, washing his eyes, teaching him commands, scolding him, and talking to him as though he were human. Esau, alas, did not always behave to his master's satisfaction. When he lay beside Tobias on the sofa, dull with lack of air and exercise, and gazed at him with soft, melancholy eyes, Tobias was pleased. He sat content and quiet, tenderly stroking Esau's back as he said:

"Poor fellow, how sadly you look at me! Yes, yes, life is sad, that you will learn before you are much older."

But sometimes Esau was wild, beside himself with the urge to exercise his hunting instincts; he would dash about the room, worry a slipper, leap on the chairs, or roll over and over with sheer excess of spirits. Then Tobias followed his motions from afar with a helpless, disapproving, wandering air and a hateful, peevish smile. At last he would brusquely call Esau to him and say:

"That's enough now, stop dashing about like that—there is no reason for such high spirits."

Once it even happened that Esau got out of the room and bounced down the stairs to the street, where he at once began to chase a cat, to eat dung in the road, and jump up at the children frantic with joy. But when the distressed Tobias appeared with his wry face, half the street roared with laughter to see him, and it was painful to behold the dog bounding away in the other direction from his master. That day Tobias in his anger beat

him for a long time.

One day, when he had had the dog for some weeks, Tobias took a loaf of bread out of the chest of drawers and began stooping over to cut off little pieces with his big bone-handled knife and let them drop on the floor for Esau to eat. The dog was frantic with hunger and playfulness: it jumped up at the bread, and the long-handled knife in the clumsy hands of Tobias ran into its right shoulder-blade. It fell bleeding to the ground.

In great alarm Tobias flung bread and knife aside and bent over the injured animal. Then the expression of his face changed, actually a gleam of relief and happiness passed over it. With the greatest care he lifted the wounded animal to the sofa—and then with what inexhaustible care and devotion he began to tend the invalid. He did not stir all day from its side, he took it to sleep on his own bed, he washed and bandaged, stroked and caressed and consoled it with unwearying solicitude.

"Does it hurt so much?" he asked. "Yes, you are suffering a good deal, my poor friend. But we must be quiet, we must try to bear it." And the look on his face was one of gentle and melancholy happiness.

But as Esau got better and the wound healed, so the spirits of Tobias sank again. He paid no more attention to the wound, confining his sympathy to words and caresses. But it had gone on well, Esau's constitution was sound; he began to move about once more. One day after he had finished off a whole plate of milk and white bread he seemed quite right again; jumped down from the sofa to rush about the room, barking joyously, with all his former lack of restraint. He tugged at the bed-covers, chased a potato round the room, and rolled over and over in his excitement.

Tobias stood by the flower-pot in the window. His arms stuck out long and lean from the ragged sleeves and he mechanically twisted the hair that hung down from his temples. His figure stood out black and uncanny against the grey wall of the next building. His face was pale and drawn with suffering and he followed Esau's pranks unmoving, with a sidelong, jealous, wicked look. But suddenly he pulled himself together, approached the dog, and made it stop jumping about; he took it slowly in his arms.

"Now, poor creature," he began, in a lachrymose tone—but

Esau was not minded to be pitied, his spirits were too high. He gave a brisk snap at the hand which would have stroked him; he escaped from the arms to the floor, where he jumped mockingly aside and ran off, with a joyous bark.

That which now happened was so shocking, so inconceivable, that I simply cannot tell it in any detail. Tobias Mindernickel stood leaning a little forward, his arms hanging down; his lips were compressed, the balls of his eyes vibrated uncannily in their sockets. Suddenly with a sort of frantic leap, he seized the animal, a large bright object gleamed in his hand—and then he flung Esau to the ground with a cut which ran from the right shoulder deep into the chest. The dog made no sound, he simply fell on his side, bleeding and quivering.

The next minute he was on the sofa with Tobias kneeling before him, pressing a cloth on the wound and stammering

“My poor brute, my poor dog! How sad everything is! How sad it is for both of us! You suffer—yes, yes, I know. You lie there so pathetic—but I am with you, I will console you—here is my best handkerchief—”

But Esau lay there and rattled in his throat. His clouded, questioning eyes were directed upon his master, with a look of complaining, innocence, and incomprehension—and then he stretched out his legs a little and died.

But Tobias stood there motionless, as he was. He had laid his face against Esau's body and he wept bitter tears.

LITTLE LIZZY

THERE ARE marriages which the imagination, even the most practised literary one, cannot conceive. You must just accept them, as you do in the theatre when you see the ancient and doddering married to the beautiful and gay, as the given premisses on which the farce is mechanically built up.

Yes, the wife of Jacoby the lawyer was lovely and young, a woman of unusual charm. Some years—shall we say thirty years?—ago, she had been christened with the names of Anna, Margarete, Rosa, Amalie, but the name she went by was always Amia, composed of the initials of her four real ones, it suited to perfection her somewhat exotic personality. Her soft, heavy hair, which she wore parted on one side and brushed straight back above her ears from the narrow temples, had only the darkness of the glossy chestnut, but her skin displayed the dull, dark sallowness of the south and clothed a form which southern suns must have ripened. Her slow, voluptuous indolent presence suggested the harem, each sensuous, lazy movement of her body strengthened the impression that with her the head was entirely subordinate to the heart. She needed only to have looked at you once, with her artless brown eyes, lifting her brows in the pithetically narrow forehead, horizontally, in a quaint way she had, for you to be certain of that. But she herself was not so simple as not to know it too. Quite simply, she avoided exposing herself, she spoke seldom and little—and what is there to say against a woman who is both beautiful and silent? Yes, the word “simple” is probably the last which should be applied to her. Her glance was artless; but also it had a kind of luxurious cunning—you could see that she was not dull, also that she might

be a mischief-maker. In profile her nose was rather too thick; but her full, large mouth was utterly lovely, if also lacking in any expression save sensuality.

This disturbing phenomenon was the wife of Jacoby the lawyer, a man of forty. Whoever looked at him was bound to be amazed at the fact. He was stout, Jacoby the lawyer; but stout is not the word, he was a perfect colossus of a man! His legs, in their columnar clumsiness and the slate-grey trousers he always wore, reminded one of an elephant's. His round, fat-upholstered back was that of a bear, and over the vast round of his belly his funny little grey jacket was held by a single button strained so tight that when it was unbuttoned the jacket came wide open with a pop. Scarcely anything which could be called a neck united this huge torso with the little head atop. The head had narrow watery eyes, a squabby nose, and a wee mouth between cheeks drooping with fullness. The upper lip and the round head were covered with harsh, scanty, light-coloured bristles that showed the naked skin, as on an overfed dog. There was no doubt that Jacoby's fatness was not of a healthy kind. His gigantic body, tall as well as stout, was not muscular, but flabby. The blood would sometimes rush to his puffy face, then ebb away leaving it of a yellowish pallor; the mouth would be drawn and sour.

Jacoby's practice was a limited one; but he was well-to-do, partly from his wife's side; and the childless pair lived in a comfortable apartment in the Kaiserstrasse and entertained a good deal. This must have been Frau Amra's taste, for it is unthinkable that the lawyer could have cared for it; he participated with an enthusiasm of a peculiarly painful kind. This fat man's character was the oddest in the world. No human being could have been politer, more accommodating, more complaisant than he. But you unconsciously knew that this over-obligingness was somehow forced, that its true source was an inward insecurity and cowardice—the impression it gave was not very pleasant. A man who despises himself is a very ugly sight; worse still when vanity combines with his cowardice to make him wish to please. This was the case, I should say, with Jacoby: his obsequiousness was almost crawling, it went beyond the bounds of personal decency. He was quite capable of saying to a lady as he escorted her to table: "My dear lady, I am a disgusting creature, but will you do me the honour?"

No humour would be mingled with the remark; it was simply cloying, bitter, self-tortured—in a word, disgusting, as he said.

The following once actually happened: the lawyer was taking a walk, and a clumsy porter with a hand-cart ran over his foot. Too late the man stopped his cart and turned round—whereupon Jacoby, quite pale and dazed, his cheeks shaking up and down, took off his hat and stuttered: "I b-beg your pardon." A thing like that is infuriating. But this extraordinary colossus seemed perpetually to suffer from a plague of conscience. When he took a walk with his wife on the Lerchenberg, the Corso of the little city, he would roll his eyes round at Amra, walking with her wonderful elastic gait at his side, and bow so anxiously, diligently, and zealously in all directions that he seemed to be begging pardon of all the lieutenants they met for being in unworthy possession of such a beautiful wife. His mouth had a pathetically ingratiating expression, as though he wanted to disarm their scorn.

I have already hinted that the reason why Amra married Jacoby is unfathomable. As for him, he was in love with her, ardently, as people of his physical make-up seldom are, and with such anxious humility as fitted the rest of his character. Sometimes, late in the evening, he would enter their large sleeping-chamber with its high windows and flowered hangings—softly, so softly that there was no sound, only the slow shaking of floor and furniture. He would come up to Amra's massive bed, where she already lay, kneel down, and with infinite caution take her hand. She would lift her brows in a level line, in the quaint way she had, and look at her husband, abject before her in the dim light, with a look of malice and sensuality combined. With his puffy, trembling hands he would softly stroke back the sleeve and press his tragic fat face into the soft brown flesh of her wrist, where little blue veins stood out. And he would speak to her, in a shaking, half-smothered voice, as a sensible man in everyday life never speaks:

"Amra, my dear Amra! I am not disturbing you? You were not asleep yet? Dear God! I have been thinking all day how beautiful you are and how much I love you. I beg you to listen, for it is so very hard to express what I feel: I love you so much that sometimes my heart contracts and I do not know where to turn. I love

you beyond my strength. You do not understand that, I know; but you believe it, and you must say, just one single time, that you are a little grateful to me. For, you see, such a love as mine to you is precious, it has its value in this life of ours. And that you will never betray or deceive me, even if you cannot love me, just out of gratitude for this love. I have come to you to beg you, as seriously, as fervently as I can . . ." here the lawyer's speech would be dissolved in sobs, in low, bitter weeping, as he knelt. Amra would feel moved; she would stroke her husband's bristles and say over and over, in the soothing, contemptuous singsong one uses to a dog who comes to lick one's feet: "Yes, yes, good doggy, good doggy!"

And this behaviour of Amra's was certainly not that of a moral woman. For to relieve my mind of the truth which I have so far withheld, she did already deceive her husband; she betrayed him for the embraces of a gentleman named Alfred Lutner, a gifted young musician, who at twenty-seven had made himself a small reputation with amusing little compositions. He was a slim young chap with a provocative face, a flowing blond mane, and a sunny smile in his eyes, of which he was quite aware. He belonged to the present-day race of small artists, who do not demand the utmost of themselves, whose first requirement is to be jolly and happy, who employ their pleasing little talents to heighten their personal charms. It pleases them to play in society the role of the naive genius. Consciously childlike, entirely unmoral and unscrupulous, merry and self-satisfied as they are, and healthy enough to enjoy even their disorders, they are agreeable even in their vanity, so long as that has not been wounded. But woe to these wretched little poseurs when serious misfortune befalls them, with which there is no coquetting, and when they can no longer be pleasant in their own eyes. They will not know how to be wretched decently and in order, they do not know how to attack the problem of suffering. They will be destroyed. All that is a story in itself. But Herr Alfred Lutner wrote pretty things, mostly waltzes and mazurkas. They would have been rather too gay and popular to be considered music as I understand it, if each of them had not contained a passage of some originality, a modulation, a harmonic phrasing, some sort of bold effect that betrayed wit and invention, which was evidently the point of the whole and which made it interesting to genuine musicians. Often these two single measures would have a

strange plaintive, melancholy tone which would come out abruptly in the midst of a piece of dance-music and as suddenly be gone.

Amra Jacoby was on fire with guilty passion for this young man, and as for him he had not enough moral fibre to resist her seductions. They met here, they met there, and for some years an immoral relation had subsisted between them, known to the whole town, who laughed at it behind the lawyer's back. But what did he think? Amra was not sensitive enough to betray herself on account of a guilty conscience, so we must take it as certain that, however heavy the lawyer's heart, he could cherish no definite suspicions.

Spring had come, rejoicing all hearts; and Amra conceived the most charming idea.

"Christian," said she—Jacoby's name was Christian—"let us give a party, a beer party to celebrate the new beer—of course quite simply, but let's have a lot of people."

"Certainly," said the lawyer, "but could we not have it a little later?"

To which Amra made no reply, having passed on to the consideration of details.

"It will be so large that we cannot have it here, we must hire a place, some sort of outdoor restaurant where there is plenty of room and fresh air. You see that, of course. The place I am thinking of is Wendelin's big hall at the foot of the Lerchenberg. The hall is independent of the restaurant and brewery, connected by a passage only. We can decorate it for the occasion and set up long tables, drink our bock, and dance—we must have music and even perhaps some sort of entertainment. There is a little stage, as I happen to know, that makes it very suitable. It will be a very original party and no end of fun."

The lawyer's face had gone a pale yellow as she spoke, and the corners of his mouth went down. He said:

"My dear Amra! How delightful it will be! I can leave it all to you, you are so clever. Make any arrangements you like."

And Amra made her arrangements. She took counsel of various ladies and gentlemen, she went in person to hire the hall, she even formed a committee of people who were invited or who volunteered

to co-operate in the entertainment. These were exclusively men, except for the wife of Herr Hildebrandt, an actor at the Hoftheater, who was herself a singer. Then there was Herr Hildebrandt, an Assessor Witznagel, a young painter, Alfred Lütner the musician, and some students brought in by Herr Witznagel, who were to do Negro dances.

A week after Amra had made her plan, this committee met in Amra's drawing-room in the Kaiserstrasse—a small, crowded, overheated room, with a heavy carpet, a sofa with quantities of cushions, a fan palm, English leather chairs, and a splay-legged mahogany table with a velvet cover, upon which rested several large illustrated morocco-bound volumes. There was a fireplace too, with a small fire still burning, and on the marble chimney-top were plates of dainty sandwiches, glasses, and two decanters of sherry. Amra reclined in one corner of the sofa under the fan palm, with her legs crossed. She had the beauty of a warm summer night. A thin blouse of light-coloured silk covered her bosom, but her skirt was of heavy dark stuff embroidered with large flowers. Sometimes she put up one hand to brush back the chestnut hair from her narrow forehead. Frau Hildebrandt sat beside her on the sofa; she had red hair and wore riding clothes. Opposite the two all the gentlemen formed a semicircle—among them Jacoby himself, in the lowest chair he could find. He looked unutterably wretched, kept drawing a long breath and swallowing as though struggling against increasing nausea. Herr Alfred Lütner was in tennis clothes—he would not take a chair, but leaned decoratively against the chimney-piece, saying merrily that he could not sit still so long.

Herr Hildebrandt talked sonorously about English songs. He was a most respectable gentleman, in a black suit, with a Roman head and an assured manner—in short a proper actor for a court theatre, cultured, knowledgeable, and with enlightened tastes. He liked to hold forth in condemnation of Ibsen, Zola, and Tolstoi, all of whom had the same objectionable aims. But today he was benignly interested in the small affair under discussion.

"Do you know that priceless song 'That's Maria!'" he asked. "Perhaps it is a little racy—but very effective. And then" so-and-so—he suggested other songs, upon which they came to an agreement and Frau Hildebrandt said that she would sing them. The young painter, who had sloping shoulders and a very blond beard,

was to give a burlesque conjuring turn. Herr Hildebrandt offered to impersonate various famous characters. In short, everything was developing nicely, the programme was apparently arranged, when Assessor Witznagel, who had command of fluent gesture and a good many duelling scars, suddenly took the word.

"All very well, ladies and gentlemen, it looks like being most amusing. But if I may say so, it still lacks something; it wants some kind of high spot, a climax as it were, something a bit startling, perhaps, to round the thing off. I leave it to you, I have nothing particular in mind, I only think . . ."

"That is true enough!" Alfred Lutner's tenor voice came from the chimney-piece where he leaned. "Witznagel is right. We need a climax. Let us put our heads together!" He settled his red belt and looked eagerly about him.

"Well, if we do not consider the famous characters as the high spot," said Herr Hildebrandt. Everybody agreed with the Assessor. Something piquant was wanted for the principal number. Even Jacoby nodded, and murmured: "Yes, yes, something jolly and striking. . . ." They all reflected.

At the end of a minute's pause, which was broken only by stifled exclamations, an extraordinary thing happened. Amra was sitting reclined among the cushions, gnawing as busily as a mouse at the pointed nail of her little finger. She had a very odd look on her face: a vacant, almost an irresponsible smile, which betrayed a sensuality both tormented and cruel. Her eyes, very bright and wide, turned slowly to the chimney-piece, where for a second they met the musician's. Then suddenly she jerked her whole body to one side as she sat, in the direction of her husband. With both hands in her lap she stared into his face with an avid and clinging gaze, her own growing visibly paler, and said in her rich, slow voice:

"Christian, suppose you come on at the end as a *chanteuse*, in a red satin baby frock, and do a dance."

The effect of these few words was tremendous. The young painter essayed to laugh good-humouredly; Herr Hildebrandt, stony-faced, brushed a crumb from his sleeve; his wife coloured up, a rare thing for her; the students coughed and used their handkerchiefs loudly; and Herr Assessor Witznagel simply left the field and got himself a sandwich. The lawyer sat huddled on his little chair,

yellow in the face, with a terrified smile. He looked all round the circle, and stammered :

"But, my God . . . I—I—I am not up to—not that I—I beg pardon, but . . ."

Alfred Lütner had lost his insouciant expression; he even seemed to have reddened a little, and he thrust out his neck to peer searchingly into Amra's face. He looked puzzled and upset.

But she, Amra, holding the same persuasive pose, went on with the same impressiveness :

"And you must sing, too, Christian, a song which Herr Lütner shall compose, and he can accompany you on the piano. We could not have a better or more effective climax."

There was a pause, an oppressive pause. Then this extraordinary thing happened, that Herr Lütner, as it were seized upon and carried away by his excitement, took a step forward and his voice fairly trembled with enthusiasm as he said :

"Herr Jacoby, that is a priceless idea, and I am more than ready to compose something. You must have a dance and song, anything else is unthinkable as a wind-up to our affair. You will see, it will be the best thing I have ever written or ever shall write. In a red satin baby frock. Oh, your wife is an artist, only an artist could have hit upon the idea ! Do say yes, I beg of you. I will do my part, you will see, it will be an achievement."

Here the circle broke up and the meeting became lively. Out of politeness, or out of malice, the company began to storm the lawyer with entreaties—Frau Hildebrandt went so far as to say, quite loudly, in her Brünnhilde voice :

"Herr Jacoby, after all, you are such a jolly and entertaining man !"

But the lawyer had pulled himself together and spoke, a little yellow, but with a strong effort at resolution :

"But listen to me, ladies and gentlemen—what can I say to you ? It isn't my line, believe me. I have no comic gift, and besides . . . in short, no, it is quite impossible, alas !"

He stuck obstinately to his refusal, and Amra no longer insisted, but sat still with her absent look. Herr Lütner was silent too, staring in deep abstraction at a pattern in the rug. Herr Hildebrandt changed the subject, and presently the committee meeting broke up without coming to a final decision about the "climax".

On the evening of the same day Amra had gone to bed and was lying there with her eyes wide open; her husband came lumbering into the bedroom, drew a chair up beside the bed, dropped into it, and said, in a low, hesitating voice:

"Listen, Amra; to be quite frank, I am feeling very disturbed. I refused them today—I did not mean to be offensive—goodness knows I did not mean that. Or do you seriously feel that—I beg you to tell me."

Amra was silent for a moment, while her brows rose slowly. Then she shrugged her shoulders and said:

"I do not know, my dear friend, how to answer you. You behaved in a way I should not have expected from you. You were unfriendly, you refused to support our enterprise in a way which they flatteringly considered to be indispensable to it. To put it mildly, you disappointed everybody and upset the whole company with your rude lack of compliance. Whereas it was your duty as host—"

The lawyer hung his head and sighed heavily. He said:

"Believe me, Amra, I had no intention to be disobliging. I do not like to offend anybody; if I have behaved badly I am ready to make amends. It is only a joke, after all, an innocent little dressing-up—why not? I will not upset the whole affair, I am ready to . . ."

The following afternoon Amra went out again to "make preparations". She drove to Number 78 Holzstrasse and went up to the second storey, where she had an appointment. And when she lay relaxed by the expression of her love she pressed her lover's head passionately to her breast and whispered:

"Write it for four hands. We will accompany him together while he sings and dances. I will see to the costume myself."

And an extraordinary shiver, a suppressed and spasmodic burst of laughter went through the limbs of both.

For anyone who wants to give a large party out of doors Herr Wendelin's place on the slope of the Lerchenberg is to be recommended. You enter it from the pretty suburban street through a tall trellised gateway and pass into the parklike garden, in the centre of which stands a large hall, connected only by a narrow passage with restaurant, kitchen, and brewery. It is a large, brightly painted wooden hall, in an amusing mixture of Chinese

and Renaissance styles. It has folding doors which stand open in good weather to admit the woodland air, and it will hold a great many people.

On this evening as the carriages rolled up they were greeted from afar by the gleam of coloured lights. The whole gateway, the trees, and the hall itself were set thick with lanterns, while the interior made an entrancing sight. Heavy garlands were draped across the ceiling and studded with paper lanterns. Hosts of electric lights hung among the decorations of the walls, which consisted of pine boughs, flags, and artificial flowers; the whole hall was brilliantly lighted. The stage had foliage plants grouped on either side, and a red curtain with a painted design of a presiding genius hovering in the air. A long row of decorated tables ran almost the whole length of the hall. And at these tables the guests of Attorney Jacoby were doing themselves well on cold roast veal and bock beer. There were certainly more than a hundred and fifty people: officers, lawyers, business men, artists, upper officials, with their wives and daughters. They were quite simply dressed, in black coats and light spring toilettes, for this was a jolly, informal occasion. The gentlemen carried their mugs in person to the big casks against one of the walls; the spacious, festive, brightly lighted room was filled with a heavy sweetish atmosphere of evergreen boughs, flowers, beer, food, and human beings; and there was a clatter and buzz of laughter and talk—the loud, simple talk and the high, good-natured, unrestrained, carefree laughter of the sort of people there assembled.

The attorney sat shapeless and helpless at one end of the table, near the stage. He drank little and now and then addressed a laboured remark to his neighbour, *Frau Regierungsrat Havermann*. He breathed offensively, the corners of his mouth hung down, he stared fixedly with his bulging watery eyes into the lively scene, with a sort of melancholy remoteness, as though there resided in all this noisy merriment something inexpressibly painful and perplexing.

Large fruit tarts were now being handed round for the company to cut from; they drank sweet wine with these, and the time for the speeches arrived. Herr Hildebrandt celebrated the new brew in a speech almost entirely composed of classical quotations, even Greek. Herr Witznagel, with florid gestures and ingenious turns of phrase, toasted the ladies, taking a handful of flowers from the

nearest vase and comparing each flower to some feminine charm. Amra Jacoby, who sat opposite him in a pale-yellow silk frock, he called "a lovelier sister of the Maréchal Niel".

Then she nodded meaningfully to her husband, brushing back her hair from her forehead; whereupon the fat man arose and almost ruined the whole atmosphere by stammering a few words with painful effort, smiling a repulsive smile. Some half-hearted bravos rewarded him, then there was an oppressive pause, after which jollity resumed its sway. All smoking, all a little elevated by drink, they rose from table and with their own hands and a great deal of noise removed the tables from the hall to make way for the dancing.

It was after eleven and high spirits reigned supreme. Some of the guests streamed out into the brightly lighted garden to get the fresh air; others stood about the hall in groups, smoking, chatting, drawing beer from the kegs, and drinking it standing. Then a loud trumpet call sounded from the stage, summoning everybody to the entertainment. The band arrived and took its place before the curtains; rows of chairs were put in place and red programmes distributed on them; the gentlemen ranged themselves along the walls. There was an expectant hush.

The band played a noisy overture, and the curtains parted to reveal a row of Negroes horrifying to behold in their barbaric costumes and their blood-red lips, gnashing their teeth and emitting savage yells.

Certainly the entertainment was the crowning success of Amra's party. As it went on, the applause grew more and more enthusiastic. Frau Hildebrandt came on in a powdered wig, pounded with a shepherdess's crook on the floor and sang—in too large a voice—"That's Maria!" A conjuror in a dress coat covered with orders performed the most amazing feats; Herr Hildebrandt impersonated Goethe, Bismarck, and Napoleon in an amazingly lifelike manner; and a newspaper editor, Dr. Wiesensprung, improvised a humorous lecture which had as its theme bock beer and its social significance. And now the suspense reached its height, for it was time for the last, the mysterious number which appeared on the programme framed in a laurel wreath and was entitled: "Little Lizzy. Song and Dance. Music by Alfred Lütner."

A movement swept through the hall, and people's eyes met as

LITTLE LIZZY

the band sat down at their instruments and Alfred L  utner came from the doorway where he had been lounging with a cigarette between his pouting lips to take his place beside Amra Jacoby at the piano, which stood in the centre of the stage in front of the curtains. Herr L  utner's face was flushed and he turned over his manuscript score nervously; Amra for her part was rather pale. She leaned one arm on the back of her chair and looked loweringly at the audience. The bell rang, the pianists played a few bars of an insignificant accompaniment, the curtains parted, little Lizzy appeared.

The whole audience stiffened with amazement as that tragic and bedizened bulk shambled with a sort of bear-dance into view. It was Jacoby. A wide, shapeless garment of crimson satin, without folds, fell to his feet; it was cut out above to make a repulsive display of the fat neck, stippled with white powder. The sleeves consisted merely of a shoulder puff, but the flabby arms were covered by long lemon-coloured gloves, on the head perched a high blond wig with a swaying green feather. And under the wig was a face, a puffy, pasty, unhappy, and desperately mirthful face, with cheeks that shook pathetically up and down and little red-rimmed eyes that strained in anguish towards the floor and saw nothing else at all. The fat man hoisted himself with effort from one leg to the other, while with his hands he either held up his skirts or else weakly raised his index fingers—these two gestures he had and knew no others. In a choked and gasping voice he sang; to the accompaniment of the piano.

The lamentable figure exhaled more than ever a cold breath of anguish. It killed every light-hearted enjoyment and lay like an oppressive weight upon the assembled audience. Horror was in the depths of all these spellbound eyes, gazing at this pair at the piano and at that husband there. The monstrous, unspeakable scandal lasted five long minutes.

Then came a moment which none of those present will forget as long as they live. Let us picture to ourselves what happened in that frightful and frightfully involved little instant of time.

You know of course the absurd little jingle called "Lizzy". And you remember the lines—

I can polka until I am dizzy,
I can waltz with the best and beyond,

I'm the popular pet, little Lizzy,
Who makes all the menfolks so fond—

which form the trivial and unlovely refrain to three longish stanzas. Alfred Lutner had composed a new setting to the verses I have quoted, and it was, as he had said it would be, his masterpiece. He had, that is, brought to its highest pitch his little artifice of introducing into a fairly vulgar and humorous piece of hack-work a sudden phrase of genuine creative art. The melody, in C-sharp major, had been in the first bars rather pretty and perfectly banal. At the beginning of the refrain the rhythm became livelier and dissonances occurred, which by means of the constant accentuation of a B-natural made one expect a transition into F-sharp major. These dissonances went on developing until the word "beyond"; and after the "I'm the" a culmination into F-sharp major should have followed. Instead of which the most surprising thing happened. That is, through a harsh turn, by means of an inspiration which was almost a stroke of genius, the key changed to F-major, and this little interlude which followed, with the use of both pedals on the long-drawn-out first syllable of the word "Lizzy", was indescribably, almost gruesomely effective. It was a complete surprise, an abrupt assault on the nerves, it shivered down the back, it was a miracle, a revelation, it was like a curtain suddenly torn away to reveal something nude.

And on the F-major chord Attorney Jacoby stopped dancing. He stood still, he stood as though rooted to the stage with his two forefingers lifted, one a little lower than the other. The word "Lizzy" stuck in his throat, he was dumb; almost at the same time the accompaniment broke sharp off, and the incredible, absurd, and ghastly figure stood there frozen, with his head thrust forward like a steer's, staring with inflamed eyes straight before him. He stared into the brightly lighted, decorated, crowded hall, in which, like an exhalation from all these people, the scandal hung and thickened into visibility. He stared at all these upturned faces, foreshortened and distorted by the lighting, into these hundreds of pairs of eyes all directed with the same knowing expression upon himself and the two at the piano. In a frightful stillness, unbroken by the smallest sound, his gaze travelled slowly and uneasily from the pair to the audience, from the audience to the

pair, while his eyes widened more and more. Then knowledge seemed to flash across his face, like a sudden rush of blood, making it red as the frock he wore, only to give way to a waxen yellow pallor—and the fat man collapsed, making the platform creak beneath his weight.

For another moment the stillness reigned. Then there came shrieks, hubbub ensued, a few gentlemen took heart to spring upon the platform, among them a young doctor—and the curtains were drawn together.

Amra Jacoby and Alfred Lütner still sat at the piano. They had turned a little away from each other, and he, with his head bent, seemed to be listening to the echo of his F-major chord, while she, with her birdlike brain, had not yet grasped the situation, but gazed round her with vacant face.

The young doctor came back presently. He was a little Jewish gentleman with a serious face and a small pointed beard. Some people surrounded him at the door with questions—to which he replied with a shrug of the shoulders and the words:

“All over.”

THE WARDROBE

IT WAS cloudy, cool, and half-dark when the Berlin-Rome express drew in at a middle-sized station on its way. Albrecht van der Qualen, solitary traveller in a first-class compartment with lace covers over the plush upholstery, roused himself and sat up. He felt a flat taste in his mouth, and in his body the none-too-agreeable sensations produced when the train comes to a stop after a long journey and we are aware of the cessation of rhythmic motion and conscious of calls and signals from without. It is like coming to oneself out of drunkenness or lethargy. Our nerves, suddenly deprived of the supporting rhythm, feel bewildered and forlorn. And this the more if we have just roused out of the heavy sleep one falls into in a train.

Albrecht van der Qualen stretched a little, moved to the window, and let down the pane. He looked along the train. Men were busy at the mail van, unloading and loading parcels. The engine gave out a series of sounds, it snorted and rumbled a bit, standing still, but only as a horse stands still, lifting its hoof, twitching its ears, and awaiting impatiently the signal to go on. A tall, stout woman in a long raincoat, with a face expressive of nothing but worry, was dragging a hundred-pound suitcase along the train, propelling it before her with pushes from one knee. She was saying nothing, but looking heated and distressed. Her upper lip stuck out, with little beads of sweat upon it—altogether she was a pathetic figure. "You poor dear thing," van der Qualen thought. "If I could help you, soothe you, take you in—only for the sake of that upper lip. But each for himself, so things are arranged in life; and I stand here at this moment perfectly carefree, looking at you as I might

at a beetle that has fallen on its back."

It was half-dark in the station shed. Dawn or twilight—he did not know. He had slept, who could say whether for two, five, or twelve hours? He had sometimes slept for twenty-four, or even more, unbrokenly, an extraordinarily profound sleep. He wore a half-length dark-brown winter overcoat with a velvet collar. From his features it was hard to judge his age: one might actually hesitate between twenty-five and the end of the thirties. He had a yellowish skin, but his eyes were black like live coals and had deep shadows round them. These eyes boded nothing good. Several doctors, speaking frankly as man to man, had not given him many more months.—His dark hair was smoothly parted on one side.

In Berlin—although Berlin had not been the beginning of his journey—he had climbed into the train just as it was moving off ---incidentally with his red leather hand-bag. He had gone to sleep and now at waking felt himself so completely absolved from time that a sense of refreshment streamed through him. He rejoiced in the knowledge that at the end of the thin gold chain he wore round his neck there was only a little medallion in his waistcoat pocket. He did not like to be aware of the hour or of the day of the week, and moreover he had no truck with the calendars. Some time ago he had lost the habit of knowing the day of the month or even the month of the year. Everything must be in the air—so he put it in his mind, and the phrase was comprehensive though rather vague. He was seldom or never disturbed in this programme, as he took pains to keep all upsetting knowledge at a distance from him. After all, was it not enough for him to know more or less what season it was? "It is more or less autumn," he thought, gazing out into the damp and gloomy train shed. "More I do not know. Do I even know where I am?"

His satisfaction at this thought amounted to a thrill of pleasure. No, he did not know where he was! Was he still in Germany? Beyond a doubt. In North Germany? That remained to be seen. While his eyes were still heavy with sleep the window of his compartment had glided past an illuminated sign; it probably had the name of the station on it, but not the picture of a single letter had been transmitted to his brain. In still dazed condition he had heard the conductor call the name two or three times, but not a syllable

had he grasped. But out there in a twilight of which he knew not so much as whether it was morning or evening lay a strange place, an unknown town.—Albrecht van der Qualen took his felt hat out of the rack, seized his red leather hand-bag, the strap of which secured a red and white silk and wool plaid into which was rolled an umbrella with a silver crook—and although his ticket was labelled Florence, he left the compartment and the train, walked along the shed, deposited his luggage at the cloakroom, lighted a cigar, thrust his hands—he carried neither stick nor umbrella—into his overcoat pockets, and left the station.

Outside in the damp, gloomy, and nearly empty square five or six hackney coachmen were snapping their whips, and a man with braided cap and long cloak in which he huddled shivering inquired politely: "*Hotel zum braven Mann?*" Van der Qualen thanked him politely and held on his way. The people whom he met had their coat-collars turned up; he put his up too, nestled his chin into the velvet, smoked, and went his way, not slowly and not too fast.

He passed along a low wall and an old gate with two massive towers; he crossed a bridge with statues on the railings and saw the water rolling slow and turbid below. A long wooden boat, ancient and crumbling, came by, sculled by a man with a long pole in the stern. Van der Qualen stood for a while leaning over the rail of the bridge. "Here," he said to himself, "is a river; here is the river. It is nice to think that I call it that because I do not know its name."—Then he went on.

He walked straight on for a little, on the pavement of a street which was neither very narrow nor very broad; then he turned off to the left. It was evening. The electric arc-lights came on, flickered, glowed, sputtered, and then illuminated the gloom. The shops were closing. "So we may say that it is in every respect autumn," thought van der Qualen, proceeding along the wet black pavement. He wore no galoshes, but his boots were very thick-soled, durable, and firm, and withal not lacking in elegance.

He held to the left. Men moved past him, they hurried on their business or coming from it. "And I move with them," he thought, "and am as alone and as strange as probably no man has ever been before. I have no business and no goal. I have not even a stick to lean upon. More remote, freer, more detached, no one can be, I

owe nothing to anybody, nobody owes anything to me. God has never held out His hand over me, He knows me not at all. Honest unhappiness without charity is a good thing; a man can say to himself: I owe God nothing."

He soon came to the edge of the town. Probably he had slanted across it at about the middle. He found himself on a broad suburban street with trees and villas, turned to his right, passed three or four cross-streets almost like village lanes, lighted only by lanterns, and came to a stop in a somewhat wider one before a wooden door next to a commonplace house painted a dingy yellow, which had nevertheless the striking feature of very convex and quite opaque plate-glass windows. But on the door was a sign: "In this house on the third floor there are rooms to let." "Ah!" he remarked; tossed away the end of his cigar, passed through the door along a boarding which formed the dividing line between two properties, and then turned left through the door of the house itself. A shabby grey runner ran across the entry. He covered it in two steps and began to mount the simple wooden stair.

The doors to the several apartments were very modest too; they had white glass panes with woven wire over them and on some of them were name-plates. The landings were lighted by oil lamps. On the third storey, the top one, for the attic came next, were entrances right and left, simple brown doors without name-plates. Van der Qualen pulled the brass bell in the middle. It rang, but there was no sign from within. He knocked left. No answer. He knocked right. He heard light steps within, very long, like strides, and the door opened.

A woman stood there, a lady, tall, lean, and old. She wore a cap with a large pale-lilac bow and an old-fashioned, faded black gown. She had a sunken birdlike face and on her brow there was an eruption, a sort of fungus growth. It was rather repulsive.

"Good evening," said van der Qualen. "The rooms?"

The old lady nodded; she nodded and smiled slowly, without a word, understandingly, and with her beautiful long white hand made a slow, languid, and elegant gesture towards the next, the left-hand door. Then she retired and appeared again with a key. "Look," he thought, standing behind her as she unlocked the door; "you are like some kind of banshee, a figure out of Hoffmann, madam." She took the oil lamp from its hook and ushered him in.

It was a small, low-ceiled room with a brown floor. Its walls were covered with straw-coloured matting. There was a window at the back in the right-hand wall, shrouded in long, thin white muslin folds. A white door also on the right led into the next room. This room was pathetically bare, with staring white walls, against which three straw chairs, painted pink, stood out like strawberries from whipped cream. A wardrobe, a washing-stand with a mirror. . . . The bed, a mammoth mahogany piece, stood free in the middle of the room.

"Have you any objections?" asked the old woman, and passed her lovely long, white hand lightly over the fungus growth on her forehead.—It was as though she had said that by accident because she could not think for the moment of a more ordinary phrase. For she added at once: "—so to speak?"

"No, I have no objections," said van der Qualen. "The rooms are rather cleverly furnished. I will take them. I'd like to have somebody fetch my luggage from the station, here is the ticket. You will be kind enough to make up the bed and give me some water. I'll take the house key now, and the key to the apartment. . . . I'd like a couple of towels. I'll wash up and go into the city for supper and come back later."

He drew a nickel case out of his pocket, took out some soap, and began to wash his face and hands, looking as he did so through the convex window-panes far down over the muddy, gas-lit suburban streets, over the arc-lights and the villas.—As he dried his hands he went over to the wardrobe. It was a square one, varnished brown, rather shaky, with a simple curved top. It stood in the centre of the right-hand wall exactly in the niche of a second white door, which of course led into the rooms to which the main and middle door on the landing gave access. "Here is something in the world that is well arranged," thought van der Qualen. "This wardrobe fits into the door niche as though it were made for it." He opened the wardrobe door. It was entirely empty, with several rows of hooks in the ceiling; but it proved to have no back, being closed behind by a piece of rough, common grey burlap, fastened by nails or tacks at the four corners.

Van der Qualen closed the wardrobe door, took his hat, turned up the collar of his coat once more, put out the candle, and set forth. As he went through the front room he thought to hear

mingled with the sound of his own steps a sort of ringing in the other room—a soft, clear, metallic sound—but perhaps he was mistaken. As though a gold ring were to fall into a silver basin, he thought, as he locked the outer door. He went down the steps and out of the gate and took the way to the town.

In a busy street he entered a lighted restaurant and sat down at one of the front tables, turning his back to all the world. He ate a *soupe aux fines herbes* with croûtons, a steak with a poached egg, a compote and wine, a small piece of green gorgonzola and half a pear. While he paid and put on his coat he took a few puffs from a Russian cigarette, then lighted a cigar and went out. He strolled for a while, found his homeward route into the suburb, and went leisurely back.

The house with the plate-glass windows lay quite dark and silent when van der Qualen opened the house door and mounted the dim stair. He lighted himself with matches as he went, and opened the left-hand brown door in the third storey. He laid hat and overcoat on the divan, lighted the lamp on the big writing-table, and found there his hand-bag as well as the plaid and umbrella. He unrolled the plaid and got a bottle of cognac, then a little glass and took a sip now and then as he sat in the arm-chair finishing his cigar. "How fortunate, after all," thought he, "that there is cognac in the world!" Then he went into the bedroom, where he lighted the candle on the night-table, put out the light in the other room, and began to undress. Piece by piece he put down his good, unobtrusive grey suit on the red chair beside the bed; but then as he loosened his brace he remembered his hat and overcoat, which still lay on the couch. He fetched them into the bedroom and opened the wardrobe. . . . He took a step backwards and reached behind him to clutch one of the large dark-red mahogany balls which ornamented the bedposts. The room, with its four white walls, from which the three pink chairs stood out like strawberries from whipped cream, lay in the unstable light of the candle. But the wardrobe over there was open and it was not empty. Somebody was standing in it, a creature so lovely that Albrecht van der Qualen's heart stood still a moment and then in long, deep, quiet throbs resumed its beating. She was quite nude and one of her slender arms reached up to crook a forefinger round one of the hooks in the ceiling of the wardrobe. Long waves of

brown hair rested on the childlike shoulders—they breathed that charm to which the only answer is a sob. The candlelight was mirrored in her narrow black eyes. Her mouth was a little large, but it had an expression as sweet as the lips of sleep when after long days of pain they kiss our brow. Her ankles nestled and her slender limbs clung to one another.

Albrecht van der Qualen rubbed one hand over his eyes and stared . . . and he saw that down in the right corner the sacking was loosened from the back of the wardrobe. "What—" said he . . . "won't you come in—or how should I put it—out? Have a little glass of cognac? Half a glass?" But he expected no answer to this and he got none. Her narrow, shining eyes, so very black that they seemed bottomless and inexpressive—they were directed upon him, but aimlessly and somewhat blurred, as though they did not see him.

"Shall I tell you a story?" she said suddenly in a low, husky voice.

"Tell me a story," he answered. He had sunk down in a sitting posture on the edge of the bed, his overcoat lay across his knees with his folded hands resting upon it. His mouth stood a little open, his eyes half-closed. But the blood pulsated warm and mildly through his body and there was a gentle singing in his ears. She had let herself down in the cupboard and embraced a drawn-up knee with her slender arms, while the other leg stretched out before her. Her little breasts were pressed together by her upper arm, and the light gleamed on the skin of her flexed knee. She talked . . . talked in a soft voice, while the candle-flame performed its noiseless dance.

Two walked on the heath and her head lay on his shoulder. There was a perfume from all growing things, but the evening mist already rose from the ground. So it began. And often it was in verse, rhyming in that incomparably sweet and flowing way that comes to us now and again in the half-slumber of fever. But it ended badly; a sad ending: the two holding each other indissolubly embraced and, while their lips rest on each other, one stabbing the other above the waist with a broad knife—and not without good cause. So it ended. And then she stood up with an infinitely sweet and modest gesture, lifted the grey sacking at the right-hand corner—and was no more there.

THE WARDROBE

From now on he found her every evening in the wardrobe and listened to her stories—how many evenings? How many days, weeks, or months did he remain in this house and in this city? It would profit nobody to know. Who would care for a miserable statistic? And we are aware that Albrecht van der Qualen had been told by several physicians that he had but a few months to live. She told him stories. They were sad stories, without relief; but they rested like a sweet burden upon the heart and made it beat longer and more blissfully. Often he forgot himself.—His blood swelled up in him, he stretched out his hands to her, and she did not resist him. But then for several evenings he did not find her in the wardrobe, and when she came back she did not tell him anything for several evenings and then by degrees resumed, until he again forgot himself.

How long it lasted—who knows? Who even knows whether Albrecht van der Qualen actually awoke on that grey afternoon and went into the unknown city; whether he did not remain asleep in his first-class carriage and let the Berlin-Rome express bear him swiftly over the mountains? Would any of us care to take the responsibility of giving a definite answer? It is all uncertain. "Everything must be in the air. . . ."

THE WAY TO THE CHURCHYARD

THE WAY to the churchyard ran along beside the highroad, ran beside it all the way to the end; that is to say, to the churchyard. On the other side of it were houses, new suburban houses, some of them still unfinished; after the houses came fields. The highroad was flanked by trees, gnarled beeches of considerable age, and half of it was paved and half not. But the way to the churchyard had a sprinkling of gravel, which made it seem like a pleasant foot-path. Between highroad and path ran a narrow dry ditch, filled with grass and wild flowers.

It was spring, it was nearly summer. The world was smiling, God's blue sky was filled with nothing but small, round, dense little morsels of cloud, tufted all over with funny little dabs of snowy white. The birds were twittering in the beeches, and a soft wind blew across the fields.

A wagon from the next village was going along the highroad towards the town, half on the paved, half on the unpaved part of the road. The driver's legs were hanging down both sides of the shaft, he was whistling out of tune. At the end of the wagon, with its back to the driver, sat a little yellow dog. It had a pointed muzzle and it gazed with an unspeakably solemn and collected air back over the way by which it had come. It was a most admirable little dog, good as gold, a pleasure to contemplate. But no, it does not belong to the matter in hand, we must pass it by.—A troop of soldiers came along, from the barracks close at hand; they marched in their own dust and sang. Another wagon passed, coming from the town and going to the next village. The driver was asleep and there was no dog; hence this wagon is devoid of interest. Two

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journeymen followed after it, one of them a giant, the other a hunchback. They walked barefoot, because they were carrying their boots on their backs; they shouted a good-natured greeting to the sleeping driver and went their way. Yes, this was but a moderate traffic, which pursued its ends without complications or incidents.

On the path to the churchyard walked a single figure, going slowly, with bent head, and leaning on a black stick. This man was named Piepsam, Praise-god Piepsam and no other name. I mention it expressly because of his ensuing most singular behaviour.

He wore black, for he was on his way to visit the graves of his loved ones. He had on a furry top hat with a wide brim, a frock-coat shiny with age, trousers both too tight and too short, and black kid gloves with all the shine rubbed off. His neck, a long, shrivelled neck with a huge Adam's apple, rose out of a frayed turn-over collar—yes, this turn-over collar was already rough at the corners. Sometimes the man raised his head to see how far away the churchyard still was; and then you got a glimpse of a strange face, a face, unquestionably, which you would not easily forget.

It was smooth-shaven and pallid. But a knobbly nose stuck out between the sunken cheeks, and this nose glowed with immoderate and unnatural redness and swarmed with little pimples, unhealthy excrescences which gave it an uneven and fantastic outline. The deep glow of the nose stood out against the dead paleness of the face; there was something artificial and improbable about it, as though he had put it on, like a carnival nose, and was wearing it as a sort of funereal joke. But it was no joke.—His mouth was big, with drooping corners, and he held it tightly compressed. His eyebrows were black, strewn with little white hairs, and when he glanced up from the ground he lifted them till they disappeared under the brim of his hat and you got a good view of the pathetically inflamed and red-rimmed eyes. In short, this was a face bound in the end to evoke one's pity.

Praise-god Piepsam's appearance was not enlivening, it fitted ill into the lovely afternoon; even for a man who was visiting the graves of his dear departed he looked much too depressed. His inner man, however, could one have seen within him, amply explained

and justified the outward state. Yes, he was a bit depressed, a bit unhappy, a little hardly treated—is it so hard for happy people like yourselves to enter into his feelings? But the fact was, things were not going just a little badly with him, they were bad in a very high degree.

In the first place, he drank. We shall come on to that later. And he was a widower, bereft and forsaken of all the world, there was not a soul on earth to love him. His wife, born Lebzelt, had been taken from him six months before, when she had presented him with a child. It was the third child, and it was born dead. The others were dead too, one of diphtheria, the other of nothing in particular, save general insufficiency. And as though that were not enough, he had lost his job, been deprived with contumely of his position and his daily bread—naturally on account of his vice, which was stronger than Piepsam.

Once he had been able to resist it, to some extent, though yielding to it by bouts. But when his wife and child were snatched from him, when he had no work and no position, nothing to support him, when he stood alone on this earth, then his weakness took more and more the upper hand. He had been a clerk in the office of a benefit society, a sort of superior copyist who got ninety marks a month. But he had been drunken and negligent and after repeated warnings had finally been discharged.

Certainly this did not improve Piepsam's morale. Indeed he declined more and more to his fall. Wretchedness, in fact, is destructive to our human dignity and self-respect—it does us no harm to get a little understanding of these matters. For there is much that is strange about them, not to say thrilling. It does the man no good to keep on protesting that he is not guilty, for in most cases he despises himself for his own unhappiness. And self-contempt and bad conduct stand in the most frightful mutual relation: they feed each other, they play into each other's hands, in a way shocking to behold. Thus was it with Piepsam. He drank because he had no self-respect, and he had no self-respect because the continual breakdown of his good intentions ate it away. At home in his wardrobe he kept a bottle with a poisonous-coloured liquor in it, the name of which I will refrain from mentioning. Before this wardrobe Praisegod Piepsam had before now gone literally on his knees, and in his wrestlings had bitten his tongue—and still in

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the end capitulated. I do not like even to mention such things—but after all they are very instructive.

Now he was taking his way to the churchyard, striking his black stick before him as he went. The gentle breeze played about his nose too, but he felt it not. A lost and most miserable human being, he stared straight ahead of him with lifted brows.—Suddenly he heard a noise behind him and listened; it was a little rustling sound coming on swiftly from the distance. He turned round and stopped.—A bicycle was approaching at full tilt, its pneumatic tyres crunching the gravel; it slowed down because Piepsam stood directly in the way.

A young man perched on the saddle, a youth, a blithe and care-free cyclist. He made no claims to belong to the great and mighty of this earth—oh, dear me, not at all! He rode a cheapish machine, of no matter what make, worth perhaps two hundred marks, at a guess. On it he rode abroad, he came out from the city and the sun glittered on his pedals as he rode straight into God's great out-of-doors—hurrah, hurrah! He wore a coloured shirt with a grey jacket, gaiters, and the sauciest cap in the world, a perfect joke of a cap, brown checks and a button on top. Underneath it a thick sheaf of blond hair stuck out on his forehead. His eyes were blue lightnings. He came on, like life itself, ringing his bell. But Piepsam did not budge a hair's breadth out of the way. He stood there and looked at Life—unbudgeably.

Life flung him an angry glance and went past—whereupon Piepsam too began to move forwards. When Life got abreast of him he said slowly, with dour emphasis:

"Number nine thousand seven hundred and seven." He clipped his lips together and looked unflinchingly at the ground, feeling Life's angry eye upon him.

Life had turned round, grasping the saddle behind it with one hand and slowly pedalling.

"What did you say?" asked Life.

"Number nine thousand seven hundred and seven," Piepsam reiterated. "Oh, nothing. I am going to report you."

"You are going to report me?" asked Life; turned round still further and rode still slower, so that it had to keep its balance by straightening the handle-bars.

"Certainly," said Piepsam, some five or six paces away.

"Why?" asked Life, getting off. It stood there in an expectant attitude.

"You know very well yourself."

"No, I do not know."

"You must know."

"No, I do not know," said Life, "and besides, it interests me very little, I must say." It turned to its bicycle as though to mount. Life certainly had a tongue in its head.

"I am going to report you for riding here on the path to the churchyard instead of out on the highroad," said Piepsam.

"But, my dear sir," said Life with a short impatient laugh, turning round again, "look at the marks of bicycles all the way along. Everybody uses this path."

"It makes no difference to me," replied Piepsam. "I am going to report you all the same."

"Just as you please," said Life, and mounted its machine. It really mounted at one go, with a single push of the foot, secured its seat in the saddle, and bent to the task of getting up as much speed as its temperament required.

"Well, if you go on riding here on the foot-path I will certainly report you," said Piepsam again, his voice rising and trembling. But Life paid no attention at all; it went on gathering speed.

If you could have seen Praisegod Piepsam's face at that moment, it would have shocked you deeply. He compressed his lips so tightly that his cheeks and even his red-hot nose were drawn out of shape. His eyebrows were lifted as high as they would go and he stared after the departing bicycle with a maniac expression. Suddenly he gave a forward rush and covered running the small space between him and Life. He laid hold on the little leather pocket behind the saddle and held fast with both hands. He clung to it with lips drawn out of human semblance, and tugged wild-eyed and speechless, with all his strength, at the moving and wobbling machine. It seemed from the appearances in doubt whether he was seeking with malice aforethought to stop it or whether he had been struck with the idea of mounting behind Life and riding with glittering pedals into God's great out-of-doors, hurrah, hurrah! No bicycle could stand the weight; it stopped, it leaned over, it fell.

But now Life became violent. It had come to a stop with one leg on the ground; it stretched out its right arm and gave Herr

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Piepsam such a push in the chest that he staggered several steps backwards. Then it said, its voice swelling to a threat:

"You are probably drunk, fellow! But if you continue to try to stop me, my fine lad, I'll just chop you into little bits—do you understand? I'll tear you limb from limb. Kindly get that through your head." Then Life turned its back on Herr Piepsam, pulled its cap furiously down on its brow, and once more mounted its bicycle. Yes, Life certainly had a tongue in its head. And it mounted as neatly as before, in one go, settled into the saddle, and had the machine at once under control. Piepsam saw its back retreating faster and faster.

He stood there gasping, staring after Life. And Life did not fall over, no mishap occurred, no tyre burst, no stone lay in the way. It moved off on its rubber wheels. Then Piepsam began to shriek and rail; his voice was no longer melancholy at all, you might call it a roar.

"You are not to go on!" he shouted. "You shall not go on. You are to ride out on the road and not here on the way to the churchyard—do you hear? Get off, get off at once! I will report you, I will enter an action against you. Oh, Lord, oh, God, if you were to fall off, if you would only fall off, you rascally windbag, I would stamp on you, I would stamp on your face with my boots, you damned villain, you—"

Never was seen such a sight. A man raving mad on the way to the churchyard, a man with his face swollen with roaring, a man dancing with rage, capering, waving his arms about, quite out of control. The bicycle was out of sight by this time, but still Piepsam stood where he was and raved.

"Stop him, stop him! Ride on the path to the churchyard, will he? You blackguard! You outrageous puppy, you! You damned monkey, I'd like to skin you alive, you with the blue eyes, you silly cur, you windbag, you blockhead, you ignorant ninny! You get off! Get off this very minute! Won't anybody pitch him off in the dirt? Riding, eh? On the way to the churchyard! Pull him down, damned puppy. . . . Oh, if I had hold of you, eh? What wouldn't I do? Devil scratch your eyes out, you ignorant, ignorant, ignorant fool!"

Piepsam went on from this to expressions which cannot be set down. Foaming at the mouth, he uttered the most shameless objur-

gations, while his voice cracked in his throat and his writhings grew more fantastic. A few children with a fox-terrier and a basket crossed over from the road; they climbed the ditch, surrounded the shrieking man and peered into his distorted face. Some labourers at work on the new houses, just about to take their midday rest, saw that something was going on and joined the group—there were both men and women among them. But Piepsam went on, his frenzy grew worse and worse. Blind with rage he shook his fist at all four quarters of the heavens, whirled round on himself, bounded and bent his knees and bobbed up again in the extremity of his effort to shriek even louder. He did not stop for breath and where all his words came from was the greatest wonder. His face was frightfully puffed out, his top hat sat on the back of his neck, and his shirt hung out of his waistcoat. By now he had passed on from the particular to the general and was making remarks which had nothing at all to do with the situation: references to his own vicious mode of life, and religious allusions which certainly sounded strange in such a voice, mingled as they were with his dissolute curses.

"Come on, come on, all of you!" he bellowed. "Not only you and you and you but all the rest of you, with your blue-lightning eyes and your little caps with buttons. I will shriek the truth in your ears and it will fill you with everlasting horror. . . . So you are grinning, so you are shrugging your shoulders? I drink . . . well, yes, of course I drink. I am even a drunkard, if you want to know. What does that signify? It is not yet the last day of all. The day will come, you good-for-nothing vermin, when God shall weigh us all in the balance . . . ah, the Son of Man shall come in the clouds, you filth, and His justice is not of this world. He will hurl you into outer darkness, all you light-headed breed, and there shall be wailing and . . ."

He was now surrounded by a crowd of some size. People were laughing at him, some were frowning. More hod-carriers and labourers, men and women, came over from the unfinished buildings. A driver got down from his wagon and jumped the ditch, whip in hand. One man shook Piepsam by the arm, but nothing came of it. A troop of soldiers marched by, turning to look at the scene and laughing. The fox-terrier could no longer contain itself; it braced its forefeet and howled into Piepsam's face with its tail

between its legs.

Then Praisegod Piepsam screamed once more with all his strength: "Get off, get off at once, you ignorant fool!" He described with one arm a wide half-circle—and collapsed. He lay there, his voice abruptly silenced, a black heap surrounded by the curious throng. His wide-brimmed hat blew off, bounced once, and then lay on the ground.

Two masons bent over the motionless Piepsam and considered his case in the moderate and reasonable tone that working-people have. One of them then got on his legs and went off at a run. The other made experiments with the unconscious man. He sprinkled him with water from a tub, he poured out brandy in the hollow of his hand and rubbed Piepsam's temples with it. None of these efforts were crowned with success.

Some little time passed. Then the sound of wheels was heard and a wagon came along the road. It was an ambulance with a great red cross on each side, drawn by two charming little horses. Two men in neat uniforms got down from the box; one went to the back of the wagon, opened it, and drew out a stretcher; the other ran over to the path, pushed away the yokels standing round Piepsam, and with the help of one of them got Herr Piepsam out of the crowd and into the road. He was laid out on the stretcher and shoved into the wagon as one shoves a loaf of bread into the oven. The door clicked shut and the two men climbed back onto the box. All that went off very efficiently, with but few and practised motions, as though in a theatre. And then they drove Praisegod Piepsam away.

THE HUNGRY

THERE CAME the moment when Detlef was struck by the sense of his own superfluity: as though by chance he let himself be borne away by the bustling throng and disappeared from the sight of his two companions without taking leave.

He gave himself to the current which bore him the whole length of the splendid auditorium; not until he knew that he was far away from Lily and the little painter did he resist the tide and stop in his tracks. He was by then near the stage, leaning against the heavily gilt projecting front of a proscenium box, between a bearded baroque caryatid with neck bent to his burden and his female counterpart whose swelling bosoms were thrust out into the hall. He put on as well as he could the air of a complacent observer, lifting his glasses now and then to his eyes—but in the brilliant circle which they swept he avoided one single point.

The fête was at its height. At the back of these swelling boxes eating and drinking were going on at laden tables, gentlemen in black and coloured dress suits, with mammoth chrysanthemums in their buttonholes, bent over the powdered shoulders of fantastically garbed and extravagantly coiffed ladies, talking and pointing down upon the motley and the bustle in the hall below as it formed eddies and currents, got choked and streamed on again, in quick and colourful play.

There were women in flowing robes, with barge-shaped hats fastened in outlandish curves beneath their chins, leaning on tall staves, holding long-handled lorgnons to their eyes. The puffed sleeves of the men came almost to the brims of their grey top hats. Loud jests mounted to the upper tiers, healths were wafted

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thitherwards in brimming glasses of champagne and beer. People pushed their way up closer to the stage and stood craning their necks to see the screaming turn then being performed. When the curtains rustled together, everybody pushed away again amid laughter and applause. The orchestra blared. The crowd wreathed and sauntered in and out and to and fro. The golden-yellow light, far brighter than day, gave brilliance to every eye; every breast heaved with quickened breath, idly yet avidly drinking in the intoxication of an atmosphere reeking with odours of food and drink, flowers and scent, dust and overheated human flesh.

The orchestra stopped. People stood where they were, arm in arm, looking up at the stage, where a new turn was beginning with a din of sound. Four or five actors in peasant costume were parodying with clarinets and stringed instruments the chromatic wistlings of the *Tristan* music. Detlef closed his eyes a moment, the lids burned. His senses were so keen that even this wanton distortion of the music could not fail to bring home to him poignantly that yearning for unity which it supremely expresses. It evoked in him overwhelmingly the suffocating melancholy of the lonely man who has lost himself in love and longing for some light and common child of life.

Lily. His soul, in imploring tenderness, shaped the name; his gaze, do what he would, turned towards her distant form. Yes, they were still there. They stood on the spot where he had left them and as the crowd thinned he would catch glimpses of her figure, leaning against the wall in her milk-white, silver-trimmed gown; her head slightly on one side, she talked with the little artist and looked into his eyes with lingering, mischievous gaze. And his eyes were just as blue, just as wide apart and unclouded as her own.

Ah, that prattle of theirs, flowing so blithely from an inexhaustible fount of simple, artless, unassuring gaiety—how could he share in it, he, a slow and serious man whose life was compact of knowledge and dreams, of paralysing insight and the inexorable urge to create! So he had left them, stolen away in a spasm of defiance and despair, in which there mingles a queer sort of magnanimity; stolen away and left these two children of life to themselves. But even at this distance came the strangling jealousy in his throat with the knowledge that they had smiled with relief at

being freed of his oppressive presence.

Why had he come, why had he come here again? To move, with his tormented soul, among these carefree throngs, knowing himself to be with but not of them? Ah, well he knew! Why then this craving for contact with them? "We lonely ones," so he had written once in a quiet hour of self-communing, "we isolated dreamers, disinherited of life, who spend our introspective days remote in an artificial, icy air and spread abroad a cold breath as from strange regions so soon as we come among living human beings and they see our brows marked with the sign of knowledge and of fear; we poor ghosts of life, who are met with an embarrassed glance and left to ourselves as soon as possible, that our hollow and knowledgeable eye may not blight all joy . . . we all cherish a hidden and unappeased yearning for the harmless, simple, and real in life; for a little friendly, devoted, familiar human happiness. That 'life' from which we are shut out—we do not envisage it as wild beauty and cruel splendour, it is not as the extraordinary that we crave it, we extraordinary ones. The kingdom of our longing love is the realm of the pleasant, the normal, and the respectable, it is life in all its tempting, banal everydayness that we want. . . ."

He looked over at them again as they stood there talking. The whole hall rang with shouts of laughter and the whining of the clarinets, as the passionate, cloying music was being distorted into shrieking sentimentality. "That is you," he thought. "You are warm, mad, sweet and lovely life, that which stands in eternal opposition to the spirit. Think not that it despises you. Think not it feels one single motion of contempt. Ah, no, we abase ourselves, we denizens of the profound, mute with our monstrous weight of knowledge, we stand afar and in our eyes there burns an avid longing to be like you.

"Do we feel pride stirring? Would we deny that we are lonely? Does our self-respect make us boast that the motions of the spirit bring to love a loftier union with life, at all times and in all places? Ah, but with whom, with what? Always only with our like, with the suffering and the yearning and the poor—never with you, you blue-eyed ones who have no need of spirit!"

Now the curtains had fallen again, dancing began afresh. The band crashed and lilted. Couples turned and glided, wove in and

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out upon the polished floor. And Lily danced with the little painter. How priceless her dainty head rose out of the stiff chalice of her silver-embroidered collar! They moved in a constricted space, with effortless, elastic turnings and pacings. His face was turned towards hers, they continued to talk and smile as they moved in obedience to the sweet and trivial measures from the band

Suddenly the lonely man felt his spirit reach out to grasp and form as with hands. "After all, you are mine," he thought, "and I am above you. Can I not see through your simple souls with a smile? Do I not observe and perpetuate, half in love and half in mockery, each naïve motion that you make? The sight of your artless activities arouses in me the forces of the Word, the power of irony. It makes my heart beat with desire and the lustful knowledge that I can reshape you as I will and by my art expose your foolish joys for the world to gape at." But then all his defiance collapsed again quite suddenly, leaving only dull longing in its wake. Ah, to be not an artist but a man, if only once, if only on a night like this! If only once to escape the inexorable doom which rang in his ears: "You may not live, you must create; you may not love, you must know." Ah, just once to live, to love and to give thanks, to feel and know that feeling is all! Just once to share your life, ye living ones, just once to drink in magic draughts the bliss of the commonplace!

He shuddered and turned away. As he looked at all these charming, overheated faces it seemed to him that they peered into his and then turned away in disgust. He was overpowered by a desire to void the field, to seek out stillness and darkness—yes, he would go away, withdraw without a word, as he had withdrawn from Lily's side; go home and lay his burning, throbbing head upon a cool pillow. He strode to the exit.

Would she see him go? He was so used to this sensation, this going away, this silent, proud, despairing withdrawal from a room, a garden, from any place where society was gathered, with the secret hope of causing even one pang in the light heart of her for whom he longed! He paused, looked across at her again; he implored her in his thoughts. Should he stay, stick it out, should he remain near her, though separated by the length of the hall, remain and await some un hoped-for bliss? No, it would all be in

vain. There would be no approach, no understanding, no hope.—"Go out into the darkness, put your head in your hands and weep, if you can—if in your world of rigid desolation, of ice, of spirit, and of art there are tears left to shed."—He left the hall.

He felt a burning, gnawing pain in his breast and at the same time a wild and senseless expectation. She must see him, must understand, must come, must follow him, even if only out of pity; must come half-way and say to him: Stay here, be glad, I love you. He moved very slowly, although well he knew, was certain to the point of absurdity, that she would not come at all, that little laughing, dancing, chattering Lily!

It was two o'clock. The corridors were empty and behind the long tables in the cloak-room the attendants nodded sleepily. No one but himself thought of going home. He wrapped himself in his cloak, took his hat and stick, and left the theatre.

Long rows of carriages stood on the square; lamps illumined the white mist of the winter night. The horses stood blanketed, with hanging heads; groups of well-bundled coachmen stamped the hard snow to warm their feet. Detlef beckoned to one, and as the man uncovered his horse he waited in the vestibule and let the cool dry air play about his throbbing temples.

The flat after-taste of the champagne made him want a smoke. Mechanically he drew out a cigarette and lighted it. But at the moment when the match went out he saw something strange. He did not at first understand it and stood there puzzled and aghast, with hanging arms. He could not get over it, could not put it out of his mind.

Out of the dark, as his vision recovered from the blindness caused by the flame from the match, there came a red-bearded, hollow-cheeked, lawless face, with horribly inflamed, red-rimmed eyes that stared with sardonic despair and a certain greedy curiosity into his own. The owner of this anguished face stood only two or three paces off, leaning against one of the lamp-posts which flanked the entrance of the theatre, with fists thrust deep into his trouser pockets and the collar of his tattered jacket turned up. His gaze travelled over Detlef's whole figure, from the opera-glass round the neck, down over the fur coat to the patent-leather shoes, then back again to search the other's face with that avid stare. Once the man gave a short, contemptuous snort; then his

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body relaxed, he shuddered, his flabby cheeks seemed to grow even hollower, while the eyelids quivered and closed and the mouth drooped at the corners with an expression both tragic and malign.

Detlef stood transfixed. He struggled to understand. He had a sudden insight as to how he must look as he stood there; his air of prosperity and well-being as he left the gay gathering, beckoned to the coachman, took the cigarette from his silver box. Involuntarily he lifted his hand in the act to strike his brow. He took a step towards the man, he drew breath to speak, to explain—but what he did was to mount silently into the waiting carriage, almost forgetting, in his distraction, to give the coachman his address. He was confounded by the inadequacy of any explanation he might make.

My God, what an error, what a crass misunderstanding! This starving, outcast man had looked at him with the bitter craving, the violent scorn that spring from envy and longing. Had he not put himself there to be looked at, this hungry man? Had not his shivering body, his tragic and malignant face, been deliberately calculated to make an impression, to give him, Detlef—as an arrogantly happy human being—one moment of misgiving, of sympathy, of distress—But you mistake, my friend—that was not the effect they had. “You thought to show me a horrifying warning out of a strange and frightful world, to arouse my remorse. But we are brothers.

“Have you a weight here, my friend, a burning weight on your breast? How well I know it. And why did you come? Why did you not hug your misery in the shadow instead of taking your stand under the lighted windows behind which are music and laughter? Do not I too know the morbid yearning that drove thee hither, to feed this thy wretchedness, which may just as well be called love as hate?

“Nothing is strange to me of all the sorrow that moves thee—and thou thoughtest to shame me! What is mind but the play of hatred? What art, but yearning in act to create? We are both at home in the land of the betrayed, the hungering, the lamenting, the denying; and common to us both are those hours full of betraying self-contempt, when we lose ourselves in a shameful love of life and of mad happiness.

“Wrong, all wrong!”—And as this pity wholly filled him he

felt kindled somewhere deep within an intuition at once painful and sweet. "Is it only he who errs? Where is the end of error? Is not all longing on earth an error, this of mine first of all, which craves the simple and the instinctive, dumb life itself, ignorant of the enlightenment which comes through mind and art, the release through the Word? Ah, we are all brothers, we creatures of the restlessly suffering will, yet we do not recognize ourselves as such. Another love is needed, another love."

And when at home he sat among his books and pictures, and the busts ranged along the wall looked down upon him, he felt moved to utter those gentle words:

"Little children, love one another."

TRISTAN

EINFRIED, THE sanatorium. A long, white, rectilinear building with a side wing, set in a spacious garden pleasingly equipped with grottoes, bowers, and little bark pavilions. Behind its slate roofs the mountains tower heavenwards, evergreen, massy, cleft with wooded ravines.

Now as then Dr. Leander directs the establishment. He wears a two-pronged black beard as curly and wiry as horsehair stuffing; his spectacle-lenses are thick, and glitter; he has the look of a man whom science has cooled and hardened and filled with silent, forbearing pessimism. And with this beard, these lenses, this look, and in his short, reserved, preoccupied way, he holds his patients in his spell: holds those sufferers who, too weak to be laws unto themselves, put themselves into his hands that his severity may be a shield unto them.

As for Fräulein von Osterloh, hers it is to preside with unwearied zeal over the housekeeping. Ah, what activity! How she plies, now here, now there, now upstairs, now down, from one end of the building to the other! She is queen in kitchen and storerooms, she mounts the shelves of the linen-presses, she marshals the domestic staff; she ordains the bill of fare, to the end that the table shall be economical, hygienic, attractive, appetizing, and all these in the highest degree; she keeps house diligently, furiously; and her exceeding capacity conceals a constant reproach to the world of men, to no one of whom has it yet occurred to lead her to the altar. But ever on her cheeks there glows, in two round, carmine spots, the unquenchable hope of one day becoming Frau Dr. Leander.

Ozone, and stirless, stirless air ! Einfried, whatever Dr. Leander's rivals and detractors may choose to say about it, can be most warmly recommended for lung patients. And not only these, but patients of all sorts, gentlemen, ladies, even children, come to stop here. Dr. Leander's skill is challenged in many different fields. Sufferers from gastric disorders come, like Frau Magistrate Spatz—she has ear trouble into the bargain—people with defective hearts, paralytics, rheumatics, nervous sufferers of all kinds and degrees. A diabetic general here consumes his daily bread amid continual grumblings. There are several gentlemen with gaunt, fleshless faces who fling their legs about in that uncontrollable way that bodes no good. There is an elderly lady, a Frau Pastor Höhlenrauch, who has brought fourteen children into the world and is now incapable of a single thought, yet has not thereby attained to any peace of mind, but must go roving spectre-like all day long up and down through the house, on the arm of her private attendant, as she has been doing this year past.

Sometimes a death takes place among the "severe cases", those who lie in their chambers, never appearing at meals or in the reception-rooms. When this happens no one knows of it, not even the person sleeping next door. In the silence of the night the waxen guest is put away and life at Einfried goes tranquilly on, with its massage, its electric treatment, douches, baths; with its exercises, its steaming and inhaling, in rooms especially equipped with all the triumphs of modern therapeutic.

Yes, a deal happens hercabouts-- the institution is in a flourishing way. When new guests arrive, at the entrance to the side wing, the porter sounds the great gong; when there are departures, Dr. Leander, together with Fräulein von Osterloh, conducts the traveler in due form to the waiting carriage. All sorts and kinds of people have received hospitality at Einfried. Even an author is here stealing time from God Almighty—a queer sort of man, with a name like some kind of mineral or precious stone.

Lastly there is, besides Dr. Leander, another physician, who takes care of the slight cases and the hopeless ones. But he bears the name of Müller and is not worth mentioning.

At the beginning of January a business man named Klöterjahn—of the firm of A. C. Klöterjahn & Co.—brought his wife to

Einfried. The porter rang the gong, and Fräulein von Osterloh received the guests from a distance in the drawing-room on the ground floor, which, like nearly all the fine old mansion, was furnished in wonderfully pure Empire style. Dr. Leander appeared straightaway. He made his best bow, and a preliminary conversation ensued, for the better information of both sides.

Beyond the windows lay the wintry garden, the flower-beds covered with straw, the grottoes snowed under, the little temples forlorn. Two porters were dragging in the guests' trunks from the carriage drawn up before the wrought-iron gate—for there was no drive up to the house.

"Be careful, Gabriele. *doucement, doucement*, my angel, keep your mouth closed," Herr Klöterjahn had said as he led his wife through the garden; and nobody could look at her without tenderheartedly echoing the caution—though, to be sure, Herr Klöterjahn might quite as well have uttered it all in his own language.

The coachman who had driven the pair from the station to the sanatorium was an uncouth man, and insensitive; yet he sat with his tongue between his teeth as the husband lifted down his wife. The very horses, steaming in the frosty air, seemed to follow the procedure with their eyeballs rolled back in their heads out of sheer concern for so much tenderness and fragile charm.

The young wife's trouble was her trachea; it was expressly so set down in the letter Herr Klöterjahn had sent from the shores of the Baltic to announce their impending arrival to the director of Einfried—the trachea, and not the lungs, thank God! But it is a question whether, if it had been the lungs, the new patient could have looked any more pure and etheric, any remoter from the concerns of this world, than she did now as she leaned back pale and weary in her chaste white-enamelled arm-chair, beside her robust husband, and listened to the conversation.

Her beautiful white hands, bare save for the simple wedding-ring, rested in her lap, among the folds of a dark, heavy cloth skirt; she wore a close-fitting waist of silver-grey with a stiff collar—it had an all-over pattern of arabesque in high-pile velvet. But these warm, heavy materials only served to bring out the unspeakable delicacy, sweetness, and languor of the little head, to make it look more than ever touching, exquisite, and unearthly. Her light-brown hair was drawn smoothly back and gathered in

a knot low in her neck, but near the right temple a single lock fell loose and curling, not far from the place where an odd little vein branched across one well-marked eyebrow, pale blue and sickly amid all that pure, well-nigh transparent spotlessness. That little blue vein above the eye dominated quite painfully the whole fine oval of the face. When she spoke, it stood out still more; yes even when she smiled—and lent her expression a touch of strain, if not actually of distress, that stirred vague fear in the beholder. And yet she spoke, and she smiled: spoke frankly and pleasantly in her rather husky voice, with a smile in her eyes—though they again were sometimes a little difficult and showed a tendency to avoid a direct gaze. And the corners of her eyes, both sides the base of the slender little nose, were deeply shadowed. She smiled with her mouth too, her beautiful wide mouth, whose lips were so pale and yet seemed to flash—perhaps because their contours were so exceedingly pure and well-cut. Sometimes she cleared her throat, then carried her handkerchief to her mouth and afterwards looked at it.

"Don't clear your throat like that, Gabriele," said Herr Klöterjahn. "You know, darling, Dr. Hinzpeter expressly forbade it, and what we have to do is to exercise self-control, my angel. As I said, it is the trachea," he repeated. "Honestly, when it began, I thought it was the lungs, and it gave me a scare, I do assure you. But it isn't the lungs—we don't mean to let ourselves in for that, do we, Gabriele, my love, eh? Ha ha!"

"Surely not," said Dr. Leander, and glittered at her with his eye-glasses.

Whereupon Herr Klöterjahn ordered coffee, coffee and rolls; and the speaking way he had of sounding the *c* far back in his throat and exploding the *b* in "butter" must have made any soul alive hungry to hear it.

His order was filled; and rooms were assigned to him and his wife, and they took possession with their things.

And Dr. Leander took over the case himself, without calling in Dr. Müller.

The population of Einfried took unusual interest in the fair new patient; Herr Klöterjahn, used as he was to see homage paid her, received it all with great satisfaction. The diabetic general, when

he first saw her, stopped grumbling a minute; the gentlemen with the fleshless faces smiled and did their best to keep their legs in order; as for Frau Magistrate Spatz, she made her her oldest friend on the spot. Yes, she made an impression, this woman who bore Herr Klöterjahn's name! A writer who had been sojourning a few weeks in Einfried, a queer sort, he was, with a name like some precious stone or other, positively coloured up when she passed him in the corridor, stopped stock-still and stood there as though rooted to the ground, long after she had disappeared.

Before two days were out, the whole little population knew her history. She came originally from Bremen, as one could tell by certain pleasant small twists in her pronunciation; and it had been in Bremen that, two years gone by, she had bestowed her hand upon Herr Klöterjahn, a successful business man, and become his life-partner. She had followed him to his native town on the Baltic coast, where she had presented him, some ten months before the time of which we write, and under circumstances of the greatest difficulty and danger, with a child, a particularly well-formed and vigorous son and heir. But since that terrible hour she had never fully recovered her strength—granting, that is, that she had ever had any. She had not been long up, still extremely weak, with extremely impoverished vitality, when one day after coughing she brought up a little blood—oh, not much, an insignificant quantity in fact; but it would have been much better to be none at all; and the suspicious thing was that the same trifling but disquieting incident recurred after another short while. Well, of course, there were things to be done, and Dr. Hinzpeter, the family physician, did them. Complete rest was ordered, little pieces of ice swallowed; morphine administered to check the cough, and other medicines to regulate the heart action. But recovery failed to set in; and while the child, Anton Klöterjahn, junior, a magnificent specimen of a baby, seized on his place in life and held it with prodigious energy and ruthlessness, a low, unobservable fever seemed to waste the young mother daily. It was, as we have heard, an affection of the trachea—a word that in Dr. Hinzpeter's mouth sounded so soothing, so consoling, so reassuring, that it raised their spirits to a surprising degree. But even though it was not the lungs, the doctor presently found that a milder climate and a stay in a sanatorium were imperative if

the cure was to be hastened. The reputation enjoyed by Einfried and its director had done the rest.

Such was the state of affairs; Herr Klöterjahn himself related it to all and sundry. He talked with a slovenly pronunciation, in a loud, good-humoured voice, like a man whose digestion is in as capital order as his pocket-book; shovelling out the words pell-mell, in the broad accents of the northern coast-dweller; hurtling some of them forth so that each sound was a little explosion, at which he laughed as at a successful joke.

He was of medium height, broad, stout, and short-legged; his face full and red, with watery blue eyes shaded by very fair lashes; with wide nostrils and humid lips. He wore English side-whiskers and English clothes, and it enchanted him to discover at Einfried an entire English family, father, mother, and three pretty children with their nurse, who were stopping here for the simple and sufficient reason that they knew not where else to go. With this family he partook of a good English breakfast every morning. He set great store by good eating and drinking and proved to be a connoisseur both of food and wines, entertaining the other guests with the most exciting accounts of dinners given in his circle of acquaintance back home, with full descriptions of the choicer and rarer dishes; in the telling his eyes would narrow benignly, and his pronunciation take on certain palatal and nasal sounds, accompanied by smacking noises at the back of his throat. That he was not fundamentally averse to earthly joys of another sort was evinced upon an evening when a guest of the cure, an author by calling, saw him in the corridor trifling in not quite permissible fashion with a chambermaid—a humorous little passage at which the author in question made a laughably disgusted face.

As for Herr Klöterjahn's wife, it was plain to see that she was devotedly attached to her husband. She followed his words and movements with a smile: not the rare arrogant toleration the ailing sometimes bestow upon the well and sound, but the sympathetic participation of a well-disposed invalid in the manifestations of people who rejoice in the blessing of abounding health.

Herr Klöterjahn did not stop long in Einfried. He had brought his wife hither, but when a week had gone by and he knew she was in good hands and well looked after, he did not linger. Duties

equally weighty—his flourishing child, his no less flourishing business—took him away; they compelled him to go, leaving her rejoicing in the best of care.

Spinell was the name of that author who had been stopping some weeks in Einfried—Detlev Spinell was his name, and his looks were quite out of the common. Imagine a dark man at the beginning of the thirties, impressively tall, with hair already distinctly grey at the temples, and a round, white, slightly bloated face, without a vestige of beard. Not that it was shaven—that you could have told; it was soft, smooth, boyish, with at most a downy hair here and there. And the effect was singular. His bright, doe-like brown eyes had a gentle expression, the nose was thick and rather too fleshy. Also, Herr Spinell had an upper lip like an ancient Roman's, swelling and full of pores; large, carious teeth, and feet of uncommon size. One of the gentlemen with the rebellious legs, a cynic and ribald wit, had christened him—"the dissipated baby"; but the epithet was malicious, and not very apt. Herr Spinell dressed well, in a long black coat and a waistcoat with coloured spots.

He was unsocial and sought no man's company. Only once in a while he might be overtaken by an affable, blithe, expansive mood; and this always happened when he was carried away by an aesthetic fit at the sight of beauty, the harmony of two colours, a vase nobly formed, or the range of mountains lighted by the setting sun. "How beautiful!" he would say, with his head on one side, his shoulders raised, his hands spread out, his lips and nostrils curled and distended. "My God! look, how beautiful!" And in such moments of ardour he was quite capable of flinging his arms blindly round the neck of anybody, high or low, male or female, that happened to be near.

On his table, for anybody to see who entered his room, there always lay the book he had written. It was a novel of medium length, with a perfectly bewildering drawing on the jacket, printed on a sort of filter-paper. Each letter of the type looked like a Gothic cathedral. Fräulein von Osterlohi had read it once, in a spare quarter-hour, and found it "very cultured"—which was her circumlocution for inhumanly boresome. Its scenes were laid in fashionable salons, in luxurious boudoirs full of choice *objets d'art*, old furniture, gobelins, rare porcelains, priceless stuffs, and art

treasures of all sorts and kinds. On the description of these things was expended the most loving care; as you read you constantly saw Herr Spinell, with distended nostrils, saying: "How beautiful! My God! look, how beautiful!" After all, it was strange he had not written more than this one book; he so obviously adored writing. He spent the greater part of the day doing it, in his room, and sent an extraordinary number of letters to the post, two or three nearly every day—and that made it more striking, even almost funny, that he very seldom received one in return.

Herr Spinell sat opposite Herr Klöterjahn's wife. At the first meal of which the new guests partook, he came rather late into the dining-room, on the ground floor of the side wing, bade good-day to the company generally in a soft voice, and betook himself to his own place, whereupon Dr. Leander perfunctorily presented him to the new-comers. He bowed, and self-consciously began to eat, using his knife and fork rather affectedly with the large, finely shaped white hands that came out from his very narrow coat-sleeves. After a little he grew more at ease and looked tranquilly first at Herr Klöterjahn and then at his wife, by turns. And in the course of the meal Herr Klöterjahn addressed to him sundry queries touching the general situation and climate of Einfried; his wife, in her charming way, added a word or two, and Herr Spinell gave courteous answers. His voice was mild, and really agreeable; but he had a halting way of speaking that almost amounted to an impediment—as though his teeth got in the way of his tongue.

After luncheon, when they had gone into the salon, Dr. Leander came up to the new arrivals to wish them *Mahlzeit*, and Herr Klöterjahn's wife took occasion to ask about their *vis-à-vis*.

"What was the gentleman's name?" she asked. "I did not quite catch it. Spinelli?"

"Spinell, not Spinelli, madame. No, he is not an Italian; he only comes from Lemberg, I believe."

"And what was it you said? He is an author, or something of the sort?" asked Herr Klöterjahn. He had his hands in the pockets of his very easy-fitting English trousers, cocked his head towards the doctor, and opened his mouth, as some people do, to listen the better.

"Yes . . . I really don't know," answered Dr. Leander. "He writes.

... I believe he has written a book, some sort of novel. I really don't know what."

By which Dr. Leander conveyed that he had no great opinion of the author and declined all responsibility on the score of him.

"But I find that most interesting," said Herr Klöterjahn's wife. Never before had she met an author face to face.

"Oh, yes," said Dr. Leander obligingly. "I understand he has a certain amount of reputation," which closed the conversation.

But a little later, when the new guests had retired and Dr. Leander himself was about to go, Herr Spinell detained him in talk to put a few questions for his own part.

"What was their name?" he asked. "I did not understand a syllable, of course."

"Klöterjahn," answered Dr. Leander, turning away.

"What's that?" asked Herr Spinell.

"Klöterjahn is their name," said Dr. Leander, and went his way. He set no great store by the author.

Have we got as far on as where Herr Klöterjahn went home? Yes, he was back on the shore of the Baltic once more, with his business and his babe, that ruthless and vigorous little being who had cost his mother great suffering and a slight weakness of the trachea; while she herself, the young wife, remained in Einfried and became the intimate friend of Frau Spatz. Which did not prevent Herr Klöterjahn's wife from being on friendly terms with the rest of the guests—for instance, with Herr Spinell who, to the astonishment of everybody, for he had up to now held communion with not a single soul, displayed from the very first an extraordinary devotion and courtesy, and with whom she enjoyed talking whenever she had any time left over from the stern service of the cure.

He approached her with immense circumspection and reverence, and never spoke save with his voice so carefully subdued that Frau Spatz, with her bad hearing, seldom or never caught anything he said. He uptoed on his great feet up to the arm-chair in which Herr Klöterjahn's wife leaned. He smiled agilely; stopped two paces off, with his body bent forward and one leg poised behind him, and talked in his halting way, as though he had an impediment in his speech; with ardour, yet prepared to retire at any moment and vanish at the first sign of fatigue or satiety. But he did

not tire her, she begged him to sit down with her and the Ratn; she asked him questions and listened with curious smiles, for he had a way of talking sometimes that was so odd and amusing, different from anything she had ever heard before.

"Why are you in Einfried, really?" she asked. "What cure are you taking, Herr Spinell?"

"Cure? Oh, I'm having myself electrified a bit. Nothing worth mentioning. I will tell you the real reason why I am here, madame. It is a feeling for style."

"Ah?" said Herr Kloterjahn's wife, supported her chin on her hand and turned to him with exaggerated eagerness, as one does to a child who wants to tell a story.

"Yes, madame. Einfried is perfect Empire. It was once a castle, a summer residence, I am told. This side wing is a later edition, but the main building is old and genuine. There are times when I cannot endure Empire and then times when I simply must have it in order to attain any sense of well being. Obviously, people feel one way among furniture that is soft and comfortable and voluptuous, and quite another among the straight lines of these tables, chairs, and draperies. This brightness and hardness, this cold, austere simplicity and reserved strength, madame—it has upon me the ultimate effect of an inward purification and rebirth. Beyond a doubt, it is morally elevating."

"Yes, that is remarkable," she said. "And when I try I can understand what you mean."

Where to he responded that it was not worth her taking any sort of trouble, and they laughed together. Frau Spatz laughed too and found it remarkable in her turn, though she did not say she understood it.

The reception-room was spacious and beautiful. The high, white folding doors that led to the billiard room were wide open and the gentlemen with the rebellious legs were disporting themselves within, others as well. On the opposite side of the room a glass door gave on the broad veranda and the garden. Near the door stood a piano. At a green-covered folding table the diabetic general was playing whist with some other gentlemen. Ladies sat reading or embroidering. The rooms were heated by an iron stove, but the chimney-piece, in the purest style, had coals pasted over with red paper to simulate a fire, and chairs were drawn up invitingly.

"You are an early riser, Herr Spinell," said Herr Klöterjahn's wife. "Two or three times already I have chanced to see you leaving the house at half past seven in the morning."

"An early riser? Ah, with a difference, madame, with a vast difference. The truth is, I rise early because I am such a late sleeper."

"You really must explain yourself, Herr Spinell." Frau Spatz too said she demanded an explanation.

"Well, if one is an early riser, one does not need to get up so early. Or so it seems to me. The conscience, madame, is a bad business. I, and other people like me, work hard all our lives to swindle our consciences into feeling pleased and satisfied. We are feckless creatures, and aside from a few good hours we go around weighted down, sick and sore with the knowledge of our own futility. We hate the useful; we know it is vulgar and unlovely, and we defend this position, as a man defends something that is absolutely necessary to his existence. Yet all the while conscience is gnawing at us, to such an extent that we are simply one wound. Added to that, our whole inner life, our view of the world, our way of working, is of a kind—its effect is frightfully unhealthy, undermining, irritating, and this only aggravates the situation. Well, then, there are certain little counter-irritants, without which we would most certainly not hold out. A kind of decorum, a hygienic regimen, for instance, becomes a necessity for some of us. To get up early, to get up ghastly early, take a cold bath, and go out walking in a snowstorm—that may give us a sense of self-satisfaction that lasts as much as an hour. If I were to act out my true character, I should be lying in bed late into the afternoon. My getting up early is all hypocrisy, believe me."

"Why do you say that, Herr Spinell? On the contrary, I call it self-abnegation." Frau Spatz, too, called it self-abnegation.

"Hypocrisy or self-abnegation—call it what you like, madame. I have such a hideously downright nature—"

"Yes, that's it. Surely you torment yourself far too much."

"Yes, madame, I torment myself a great deal."

The fine weather continued. Rigid and spotless white the region lay, the mountains, house and garden, in a windless air that was blinding clear and cast bluish shadows, and above it arched the

spotless pale-blue sky, where myriads of bright particles of glittering crystals seemed to dance. Herr Kloterjahn's wife felt tolerably well these days: free of fever, with scarce any cough, and able to eat without too great distaste. Many days she sat taking her cure for hours on end in the sunny cold on the terrace. She sat in the snow, bundled in wraps and furs, and hopefully breathed in the pure icy air to do her trachea good. Sometimes she saw Herr Spinell, dressed like herself, and in fur boots that made his feet a fantastic size, taking an airing in the garden. He walked with tentative tread through the snow, holding his arms in a certain careful pose that was stiff yet not without grace, coming up to the terrace he would bow very respectfully and mount the first step or so to exchange a few words with her.

"Today on my morning walk I saw a beautiful woman—good Lord! how beautiful she was!" he said, laid his head on one side and spread out his hands.

"Reilly, Herr Spinell! Do describe her to me!"

"That I cannot do. Or, rather, it would not be a fair picture. I only saw the lady as I glanced at her in passing, I did not actually see her at all. But that fleeting glimpse was enough to rouse my fancy and make me carry away a picture so beautiful that—good Lord! how beautiful it is!"

She laughed. "Is that the way you always look at beautiful women, Herr Spinell? Just a fleeting glance?"

"Yes, madame, it is a better way than if I were avid of actuality, stared them plump in the face, and carried away with me only a consciousness of the blemishes they in fact possess."

"'Avid of actuality'—what a strange phrase, a regular literary phrase, Herr Spinell, no one but an author could have said that. It impresses me very much, I must say. There is a lot in it that I dimly understand, there is something free about it, and independent, that even seems to be looking down on reality though it is so very respectable—is respectability itself, as you might say. And it makes me comprehend, too, that there is something else besides the tangible, something more subtle—"

"I know only one face," he said suddenly, with a strange lift in his voice, carrying his closed hands to his shoulders as he spoke and showing his carious teeth in an almost hysterical smile, "I know only one face of such lofty nobility that the mere thought of

enhancing it through my imagination would be blasphemous; at which I could wish to look, on which I could wish to dwell, not minutes and not hours, but my whole life long; losing myself utterly therein, forgotten to every earthly thought. . . .”

“Yes, indeed, Herr Spinell. And yet don’t you find Fräulein von Osterloh has rather prominent ears?”

He replied only by a profound bow; then, standing erect, let his eyes rest with a look of embarrassment and pain on the strange little vein that branched pale-blue and sickly across her pure translucent brow.

An odd sort, a very odd sort. Herr Klöterjahn’s wife thought about him sometimes; for she had much leisure for thought. Whether it was that the change of air began to lose its effect or some positively detrimental influence was at work, she began to go backward, the condition of her trachea left much to be desired, she had fever not infrequently, felt tired and exhausted, and could not eat. Dr. Leander most emphatically recommended rest, quiet, caution, care. So she sat, when indeed she was not forced to lie, quite motionless, in the society of Frau Spatz, holding some sort of sewing which she did not sew, and following one or another train of thought.

Yes, he gave her food for thought, this very odd Herr Spinell; and the strange thing was she thought not so much about him as about herself, for he had managed to rouse in her a quite novel interest in her own personality. One day he had said, in the course of conversation:

“No, they are positively the most enigmatical facts in nature—women, I mean. That is a truism, and yet one never ceases to marvel at it afresh. Take some wonderful creature, a sylph, an airy wraith, a fairy dream of a thing, and what does she do? Goes and gives herself to a brawny Hercules at a country fair, or maybe to a butcher’s apprentice. Walks about on his arm, even leans her head on his shoulder and looks round with an impish smile as if to say: ‘Look on this, if you like, and break your heads over it.’ And we break them.”

With this speech Herr Klöterjahn’s wife had occupied her leisure again and again.

Another day, to the wonderment of Frau Spatz, the following

conversation took place:

"May I ask, madame—though you may very likely think me prying—what your name really is?"

"Why, Herr Spinell, you know my name is Kloterjahn!"

"H'm. Yes, I know that—or, rather, I deny it. I mean your own name, your maiden name, of course. You will in justice, madame, admit that anybody who calls you Kloterjahn ought to be thrashed."

She laughed so hard that the little blue vein stood out alarmingly on her brow and gave the pale sweet face a strained expression most disquieting to see.

"Oh, no! Not at all, Herr Spinell! Thrashed, indeed! Is the name Kloterjahn so horrible to you?"

"Yes, madame. I hate the name from the bottom of my heart. I hated it the first time I heard it. It is the abandonment of ugliness; it is grotesque to make you comply with the custom so far as to fasten your husband's name upon you, is barbarous and vile"

"Well, and how about Eckhof? Is that any better? Eckhof is my father's name."

"Ah, you see! Eckhof is quite another thing. There was a great actor named Eckhof. Eckhof will do nicely. You spoke of your father—Then is your mother—?"

"Yes, my mother died when I was little"

"Ah! Tell me a little more of yourself, pray. But not if it tires you. When it tires you, stop, and I will go on talking about Paris, as I did the other day. But you could speak very softly, or even whisper—that would be more beautiful still. You were born in Bremen?" He breathed, rather than uttered, the question with an expression so awed, so heavy with import, as to suggest that Bremen was a city like no other on earth, full of hidden beauties and nameless adventures, and ennobling in some mysterious way those born within its walls.

"Yes, imagine," said she involuntarily. "I was born in Bremen."

"I was there once," he thoughtfully remarked.

"Goodness me, you have been there, too? Why, Herr Spinell, it seems to me you must have been everywhere there is between Spitzbergen and Tunis!"

"Yes, I was there once," he repeated. "A few hours, one evening. I recall a narrow old street, with a strange, warped-looking moon

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above the gabled roofs. Then I was in a cellar that smelled of wine and mould. It is a poignant memory."

"Really? Where could that have been, I wonder? Yes, in just such a grey old gabled house I was born, one of the old merchant houses, with echoing wooden floor and white-painted gallery."

"Then your father is a business man?" he asked hesitatingly.

"Yes, but he is also, and in the first place, an artist."

"Ah! In what way?"

"He plays the violin. But just saying that does not mean much. It is *how* he plays, Herr Spinell—it is that that matters! Sometimes I cannot listen to some of the notes without the tears coming into my eyes and making them burn. Nothing else in the world makes me feel like that. You won't believe it—"

"But I do. Oh, very much I believe it! Tell me, madame, your family is old, is it not? Your family has been living for generations in the old gabled house—living and working and closing their eyes on time?"

"Yes. Tell me why you ask."

"Because it not infrequently happens that a race with sober, practical bourgeois traditions will towards the end of its days flare up in some form of art."

"Is that a fact?"

"Yes."

"It is true, my father is surely more of an artist than some that call themselves so and get the glory of it. I only play the piano a little. They have forbidden me now, but at home, in the old days, I still played. Father and I played together. Yes, I have precious memories of all those years; and especially of the garden, our garden, back of the house. It was dreadfully wild and overgrown, and shut in by crumbling mossy walls. But it was just that gave it such charm. In the middle was a fountain with a wide border of sword-lilies. In summer I spent long hours there with my friends, We all sat round the fountain on little camp-stools—"

"How beautiful!" said Herr Spinell, and flung up his shoulders. "You sat there and sang?"

"No, we mostly crocheted."

"But still—"

"Yes, we crocheted and chattered, my six friends and I—"

"How beautiful! Good Lord! think of it, *how beautiful!*" cried

Herr Spinell again, his face quite distorted with emotion.

"Now, what is it you find so particularly beautiful about that, Herr Spinell?"

"Oh, there being six of them besides you, and your being not one of the six, but a queen among them . . . set apart from your six friends. A little crown showed in your hair—quite a modest, unostentatious little crown, still it was there—"

"Nonsense, there was nothing of the sort."

"Yes, there was; it shone unseen. But if I had been there, standing among the shrubbery, one of those times, I should have seen it."

"God knows what you would have seen. But you were not there. Instead of that, it was my husband who came out of the shrubbery one day, with my father. I was afraid they had been listening to our prattle—"

"So it was there, then, madame, that you first met your husband?"

"Yes, there it was I saw him first," she said, in quite a glad, strong voice; she smiled, and as she did so the little blue vein came out and gave her face a constrained and anxious expression. "He was calling on my father on business, you see. Next day he came to dinner, and three days later he proposed for my hand."

"Really? It all happened as fast as that?"

"Yes. Or, rather, it went a little slower after that. For my father was not very much inclined to it, you see, and consented on condition that we wait a long time first. He would rather I had stopped with him, and he had doubts in other ways too. But—"

"But?"

"But I had set my heart on it," she said, smiling; and once more the little vein dominated her whole face with its look of constraint and anxiety.

"Ah, so you set your heart on it."

"Yes, and I displayed great strength of purpose, as you see—"

"As I see. Yes."

"So that my father had to give way in the end."

"And so you forsook him and his fiddle and the old house with the overgrown garden, and the fountain and your six friends, and clave unto Herr Klöterjahn—"

"'And clave unto'—you have such a strange way of saying

things, Herr Spinell. Positively biblical. Yes, I forsook all that; nature has arranged things that way."

"Yes, I suppose that is it."

"And it was a question of my happiness—"

"Of course. And happiness came to you?"

"It came, Herr Spinell, in the moment when they brought little Anton to me, our little Anton, and he screamed so lustily with his strong little lungs—he is very, very strong and healthy, you know—"

"This is not the first time, madame, that I have heard you speak of your little Anton's good health and great strength. He must be quite uncommonly healthy?"

"That he is. And looks so absurdly like my husband!"

"Ah! . . . So that was the way of it. And now you are no longer called by the name of Eckhof, but a different one, and you have your healthy little Anton, and are troubled with your trachea."

"Yes. And you are a perfectly enigmatic man, Herr Spinell, I do assure you."

"Yes. God knows you certainly are!" said Frau Spatz, who was present on this occasion.

And that conversation, too, gave Herr Klöterjahn's wife food for reflection. Idle as it was, it contained much to nourish those secret thoughts of hers about herself. Was this the baleful influence which was at work? Her weakness increased and fever often supervened, a quiet glow in which she rested with a feeling of mild elevation, to which she yielded in a pensive mood that was a little affected, self-satisfied, even rather self-righteous. When she had not to keep her bed, Herr Spinell would approach her with immense caution, tiptoeing on his great feet; he would pause two paces off, with his body inclined and one leg behind him, and speak in a voice that was hushed with awe, as though he would lift her higher and higher on the tide of his devotion until she rested on billowy cushions of cloud where no shrill sound nor any earthly touch might reach her. And when he did this she would think of the way Herr Klöterjahn said: "Take care, my angel, keep your mouth closed, Gabriele," a way that made her feel as though he had struck her roughly though well-meaningly on the shoulder. Then as fast as she could she would put the memory away and rest in her weakness and elevation of spirit upon the

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clouds which Herr Spinell spread out for her.

One day she abruptly returned to the talk they had had about her early life. "Is it really true, Herr Spinell," she asked, "that you would have seen the little gold crown?"

Two weeks had passed since that conversation, yet he knew at once what she meant, and his voice shook as he assured her that he would have seen the little crown as she sat among her friends by the fountain—would have caught its fugitive gleam among her locks.

A few days later one of the guests chanced to make a polite inquiry after the health of little Anton. Herr Klöterjahn's wife gave a quick glance at Herr Spinell, who was standing near, and answered in a perfunctory voice:

"Thanks, how should he be? He and my husband are quite well, of course."

There came a day at the end of February, colder, purer, more brilliant than any that had come before it, and high spirits held sway at Einfried. The "heart cases" consulted in groups, flushed of cheek, the diabetic general carolled like a boy out of school, and the gentlemen of the rebellious legs cast aside all restraint. And the reason for all these things was that a sleighing party was in prospect, an excursion in sledges into the mountains, with cracking whips and sleigh-bells jingling. Dr. Leander had arranged this diversion for his patients.

The serious cases, of course, had to stop at home. Poor things! The other guests arranged to keep it from them; it did them good to practise this much sympathy and consideration. But a few of those remained at home who might very well have gone. Fräulein von Osterloh was of course excused, she had too much on her mind to permit her even to think of going. She was needed at home, and at home she remained. But the disappointment was general when Herr Klöterjahn's wife announced her intention of stopping away. Dr. Leander exhorted her to come and get the benefit of the fresh air—but in vain. She said she was not up to it, she had a headache, she felt too weak—they had to resign themselves. The cynical gentleman took occasion to say:

"You will see, the dissipated baby will stop at home too."

And he proved to be right, for Herr Spinell gave out that he

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intended to "work" that afternoon—he was prone thus to characterize his dubious activities. Anyhow, not a soul regretted his absence; nor did they take more to heart the news that Frau Magistrate Spatz had decided to keep her young friend company at home—sleighting made her feel sea-sick.

Luncheon on the great day was eaten as early as twelve o'clock, and immediately thereafter the sledges drew up in front of Einfried. The guests came through the garden in little groups, warmly wrapped, excited, full of eager anticipation. Herr Klöterjahn's wife stood with Frau Spatz at the glass door which gave on the terrace, while Herr Spinell watched the setting-forth from above, at the window of his room. They saw the little struggles that took place for the best seats, amid joking and laughter; and Fräulein von Osterloh, with a fur boa round her neck, running from one sleigh to the other and shoving baskets of provisions under the seats; they saw Dr. Leander, with his fur cap pulled low on his brow, marshalling the whole scene with his spectacle-lenses glittering, to make sure everything was ready. At last he took his own seat and gave the signal to drive off. The horses started up, a few of the ladies shrieked and collapsed, the bells jingled, the short-shafted whips cracked and their long lashes trailed across the snow; Fräulein von Osterloh stood at the gate waving her handkerchief until the train rounded a curve and disappeared; slowly the merry tinkling died away. Then she turned and hastened back through the garden in pursuit of her duties; the two ladies left the glass door, and almost at the same time Herr Spinell abandoned his post of observation above.

Quiet reigned at Einfried. The party would not return before evening. The serious cases lay in their rooms and suffered. Herr Klöterjahn's wife took a short turn with her friend, then they went to their respective chambers. Herr Spinell kept to his, occupied in his own way. Towards four o'clock the ladies were served with half a litre of milk apiece, and Herr Spinell with a light tea. Soon after, Herr Klöterjahn's wife tapped on the wall between her room and Frau Spatz's and called:

"Shan't we go down to the salon, Frau Spatz? I have nothing to do up here."

"In just a minute, my dear," answered she. "I'll just put on my shoes—if you will wait a minute. I have been lying down."

The salon, naturally, was empty. The ladies took seats by the fireplace. The Frau Magistrate embroidered flowers on a strip of canvas; Herr Klöterjahn's wife took a few stitches too, but soon let her work fall in her lap and, leaning on the arm of her chair, fell to dreaming. At length she made some remark, hardly worth the trouble of opening her lips for; the Frau Magistrate asked what she said, and she had to make the effort of saying it all over again, which quite wore her out. But just then steps were heard outside, the door opened, and Herr Spinell came in.

"Shall I be disturbing you?" he asked mildly from the threshold, addressing Herr Klöterjahn's wife and her alone; bending over her, as it were, from a distance, in the tender, hovering way he had.

The young wife answered:

"Why should you? The room is free to everybody—and besides, why would it be disturbing us? On the contrary, I am convinced that I am boring Frau Spatz."

He had no ready answer, merely smiled and showed his carious teeth, then went hesitatingly up to the glass door, the ladies watching him, and stood with his back to them looking out. Presently he half turned round, still gazing into the garden, and said:

"The sun has gone in. The sky clouded over without our seeing it. The dark is coming on already."

"Yes, it is all overcast," replied Herr Klöterjahn's wife. "It looks as though our sleighing party would have some snow after all. Yesterday at this hour it was still broad daylight, now it is already getting dark."

"Well," he said, "after all these brilliant weeks a little dullness is good for the eyes. The sun shines with the same penetrating clearness upon the lovely and the commonplace, and I for one am positively grateful to it for finally going under a cloud."

"Don't you like the sun, Herr Spinell?"

"Well, I am no painter . . . when there is no sun one becomes more profound. . . . It is a thick layer of greyish-white cloud. Perhaps it means thawing weather for tomorrow. But, madame, let me advise you not to sit there at the back of the room looking at your embroidery."

"Don't be alarmed; I am not looking at it. But what else is there to do?"

He had sat down on the piano-stool, resting one arm on the lid of the instrument.

"Music," he said. "If we could only have a little music here. The English children sing darky songs, and that is all."

"And yesterday afternoon Fräulein von Osterloh rendered 'Cloister Bells' at top speed," remarked Herr Klöterjahn's wife.

"But you play, madame!" said he, in an imploring tone. He stood up. "Once you used to play every day with your father."

"Yes, Herr Spinell, in those old days I did. In the time of the fountain, you know."

"Play to us, today," he begged. "Just a few notes—this once. If you knew how I long for some music—"

"But our family physician, as well as Dr. Leander, expressly forbade it, Herr Spinell."

"But they aren't here—either of them. We are free agents. Just a few bars—"

"No, Herr Spinell, it would be no use. Goodness knows what marvels you expect of me—and I have forgotten everything I knew. Truly. I know scarcely anything by heart."

"Well, then, play that scarcely anything. But there are notes here too. On top of the piano. No, that is nothing. But here is some Chopin."

"Chopin?"

"Yes, the Nocturnes. All we have to do is to light the candles—"

"Pray don't ask me to play, Herr Spinell. I must not. Suppose it were to be bad for me—"

He was silent; standing there in the light of the two candles, with his great feet, in his long black tail-coat, with his beardless face and greying hair. His hands hung down at his sides.

"Then, madame, I will ask no more," he said at length, in a low voice. "If you are afraid it will do you harm, then we shall leave the beauty dead and dumb that might have come alive beneath your fingers. You were not always so sensible; at least not when it was the opposite question from what it is today, and you had to decide to take leave of beauty. Then you did not care about your bodily welfare; you showed a firm and unhesitating resolution when you left the fountain and laid aside the little gold crown. Listen," he said, after a pause, and his voice dropped still lower; "if you sit down and play as you used to play when your father

stood behind you and brought tears to your ears with the tones of his violin—who knows but the little gold crown might glimmer once more in your hair. . . .”

“Really,” said she, with a smile. Her voice happened to break on the word, it sounded husky and barely audible. She cleared her throat and went on :

“Are those really Chopin’s Nocturnes you have there?”

“Yes, here they are open at the place; everything is ready.”

“Well, then, in God’s name, I will play one,” said she. “But only one—do you hear? In any case, one will do you, I am sure.”

With which she got up, laid aside her work, and went to the piano. She seated herself on the music-stool, on a few bound volumes, arranged the lights, and turned over the notes. Herr Spinell had drawn up a chair and sat beside her, like a music-master.

She played the Nocturne in E major, opus 9, number 2. If her playing had really lost very much then she must originally have been a consummate artist. The piano was mediocre, but after the first few notes she learned to control it. She displayed a nervous feeling for modulations of timbre and a joy in mobility of rhythm that amounted to the fantastic. Her attack was at once firm and soft. Under her hands the very last drop of sweetness was wrung from the melody; the embellishments seemed to cling with slow grace about her limbs.

She wore the same frock as on the day of her arrival, the dark, heavy bodice with the velvet arabesques in high relief, that gave her head and hands such an unearthly fragile look. Her face did not change as she played, but her lips seemed to become more clear-cut, the shadows deepened at the corners of her eyes. When she finished she laid her hands in her lap and went on looking at the notes. Herr Spinell sat motionless.

She played another Nocturne, and then a third. Then she stood up, but only to look on the top of the piano for more music.

It occurred to Herr Spinell to look at the back-bound volumes on the piano-stool. All at once he uttered an incoherent exclamation, his large white hands clutching at one of the books.

“Impossible! No, it cannot be,” he said. “But yes, it is. Guess what this is—what was lying here! Guess what I have in my hands.”

“What?” she asked.

Mutely he showed her the title-page. He was quite pale; he let the book sink and looked at her, his lips trembling.

"Really? How did that get here? Give it me," was all she said; set the notes on the piano and after a moment's silence began to play.

He sat beside her, bent forward, his hands between his knees, his head bowed. She played the beginning with exaggerated and tormenting slowness, with painfully long pauses between the single figures. The *Sehnsuchtsmotiv*, roving lost and forlorn like a voice in the night, lifted its trembling question. Then silence, a waiting. And lo, an answer: the same timorous, lonely note, only clearer, muted *sforzando*, like mounting passion, the love-motif came in; reared and soared and yearned ecstatically upward to its consummation, sank back, was resolved; the cellos taking up the melody to carry it on with their deep, heavy notes of rapture and despair.

Not unsuccessfully did the player seek to suggest the orchestral effects upon the poor instrument at her command. The violin runs of the great climax rang out with brilliant precision. She played with a fastidious reverence, lingering on each figure, bringing out each detail, with the self-forgotten concentration of the priest who lifts the Host above his head. Here two forces, two beings, strove towards each other, in transports of joy and pain; here they embraced and became one in delirious yearning after eternity and the absolute. . . . The prelude flamed up and died away. She stopped at the point where the curtains part, and sat speechless, staring at the keys.

But the boredom of Frau Spatz had by now reached that pitch where it distorts the countenance of man, makes the eyes protrude from the head, and lends the features a corpse-like and terrifying aspect. More than that, this music acted on the nerves that controlled her digestion, producing in her dyspeptic organism such *malaise* that she was really afraid she would have an attack.

"I shall have to go up to my room," she said weakly. "Goodbye; I will come back soon."

She went out. Twilight was far advanced. Outside the snow fell thick and soundlessly upon the terrace. The two tapers cast a flickering, circumscribed light.

"The Second Act," he whispered, and she turned the pages and began.

What was it dying away in the distance—the ring of a horn? The rustle of leaves? The rippling of a brook? Silence and night crept up over grove and house; the power of longing had full sway, no prayers or warnings could avail against it. The holy mystery was consummated. The light was quenched; with a strange clouding of the timbre the death-motif sank down: white-veiled desire, by passion driven, fluttered towards love as through the dark it groped to meet her.

Ah, boundless, unquenchable exultation of union in the eternal beyond! Freed from torturing error, escaped from fettering space and time, the Thou and the I, the Thine and the Mine at one forever in a sublimity of bliss! The day might part them with deluding show; but when night fell, then by the power of the potion they would see clear. To him who has looked upon the night of death and known its secret sweets, to him day never can be aught but vain, nor can he know a longing save for night, eternal, real, in which he is made one with love.

O night of love, sink downwards and enfold them, grant them the oblivion they crave, release them from this world of partings and betrayals. Lo, the last light is quenched. Fancy and thought alike are lost, merged in the mystic shade that spread its wings of healing above their madness and despair. "Now, when deceitful daylight pales, when my raptured eye grows dim, then all that from which the light of day would shut my sight, seeking to blind me with false show, to the stanchless torments of my longing soul—then, ah, then, O wonder of fulfilment, even then I am the world!" Followed Brangāna's dark notes of warning, and then those soaring violins so higher than all reason.

"I cannot understand it all, Herr Spinell. Much of it I only divine. What does it mean, this 'even then I am the world'?"

He explained, in a few low-toned words.

"Yes, yes. It means that. How is it you can understand it all so well, yet cannot play it?"

Strangely enough, he was not proof against this simple question. He coloured, twisted his hands together, shrank into his chair.

"The two things seldom happen together," he wrung from his lips at last. "No, I cannot play. But go on."

And on they went, into the intoxicated music of the love-mystery. Did love ever die? Tristan's love? The love of thy Isolde,

and of mine? Ah, no, death cannot touch that which can never die—and what of him could die, save what distracts and tortures love and severs united lovers? Love joined the two in sweet conjunction, death was powerless to sever such a bond, save only when death was given to one with the very life of the other. Their voices rose in mystic unison, rapt in the wordless hope of that death-in-love, of endless oneness in the wonder-kingdom of the night. Sweet night! Eternal night of love! And all-encompassing land of rapture! Once envisaged or divined, what eye could bear to open again on desolate dawn? Forfend such fears, most gentle death! Release these lovers quite from need of waking. Oh tumultuous storm of rhythms! Oh, glad chromatic upward surge of metaphysical perception! How find, how bind this bliss so far remote from parting's torturing pangs? Ah, gentle glow of longing, soothing and kind, ah, yielding sweet-sublime, ah, raptured sinking into the twilight of eternity! Thou Isolde, Tristan I, yet no more Tristan, no more Isolde. . . .

All at once something startling happened. The musician broke off and peered into the darkness with her hand above her eyes. Herr Spinell turned round quickly in his chair. The corridor door had opened, a sinister form appeared, leant on the arm of a second form. It was a guest of Einfried, one of those who, like themselves, had been in no state to undertake the sleigh-ride, but had passed this twilight hour in one of her pathetic, instinctive rounds of the house. It was that patient who had borne fourteen children and was no longer capable of a single thought; it was Frau Pastor Höhlenrauch, on the arm of her nurse. She did not look up; with groping step she paced the dim background of the room and vanished by the opposite door, rigid and still, like a lost and wandering soul. Stillness reigned once more.

"That was Frau Pastor Höhlenrauch," he said.

"Yes, that was poor Frau Höhlenrauch," she answered. Then she turned over some leaves and played the finale, played Isolde's song of love and death.

How colourless and clear were her lips, how deep the shadows lay beneath her eyes! The little pale-blue vein in her transparent brow showed fearfully plain and prominent. Beneath her flying fingers the music mounted to its unbelievable climax and was resolved in that ruthless, sudden *pianissimo* which is like having

the ground glide from beneath one's feet, yet like a sinking too into the very deeps of desire. Followed the immeasurable plenitude of that vast redemption and fulfilment; it was repeated, swelled into a deafening, unquenchable tumult of immense appeasement that wove and welled and seemed about to die away, only to swell again and weave the *Sehnsuchtsmotiv* into its harmony; at length to breathe an outward breath and die, faint on the air, and soar away. Profound stillness.

They both listened, their heads on one side.

"Those are bells," she said.

"It is the sleighs," he said. "I will go now."

He rose and walked across the room. At the door he halted, then turned and shifted uneasily from one foot to the other. And then, some fifteen or twenty paces from her, it came to pass that he fell upon his knees, both knees, without a sound. His long black coat spread out on the floor. He held his hands clasped over his mouth, and his shoulders heaved.

She sat there with hands in her lap, leaning forward, turned away from the piano, and looked at him. Her face wore a distressed, uncertain smile, while her eyes searched the dimness at the back of the room, searched so painfully, so dreamily, she seemed hardly able to focus her gaze.

The jingling of sleigh-bells came nearer and nearer, there was the crack of whips, a babel of voices.

The sleighing party had taken place on the twenty-sixth of February, and was talked of for long afterwards. The next day, February twenty-seventh, a day of thaw, that set everything to melting and dripping, splashing and running, Herr Kloterjahn's wife was in capital health and spirits. On the twenty-eighth she brought up a little blood—not much, still it was blood, and accompanied by far greater loss of strength than ever before. She went to bed.

Dr. Leander examined her, stony-faced. He prescribed according to the dictates of science—morphia, little pieces of ice, absolute quiet. Next day, on account of pressure of work, he turned her case over to Dr. Müller, who took it on in humility and meekness of spirit and according to the letter of his contract—a quiet, pallid, insignificant little man, whose unadvertised activities were consecrated to the care of the slight cases and the hopeless ones.

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Dr. Müller presently expressed the view that the separation between Frau Klöterjahn and her spouse had lasted overlong. It would be well if Herr Klöterjahn, in case his flourishing business permitted, were to make another visit to Einfried. One might write him—or even wire. And surely it would benefit the young mother's health and spirits if he were to bring young Anton with him—quite aside from the pleasure it would give the physicians to behold with their own eyes this so healthy little Anton.

And Herr Klöterjahn came. He got Herr Müller's little wire and arrived from the Baltic coast. He got out of the carriage, ordered coffee and rolls, and looked considerably aggrieved.

"My dear sir," he asked, "what is the matter? Why have I been summoned?"

"Because it is desirable that you should be near your wife," Dr. Müller replied.

"Desirable! Desirable! But is it *necessary*? It is a question of expense with me—times are poor and railway journeys cost money. Was it imperative I should take this whole day's journey? If it were the lungs that are attacked, I should say nothing. But as it is only the trachea, thank God—"

"Herr Klöterjahn," said Dr. Müller mildly, "in the first place the trachea is an important organ. . . ." He ought not to have said "in the first place," because he did not go on to the second.

But there also arrived at Einfried, in Herr Klöterjahn's company, a full-figured personage arrayed all in red and gold and plaid, and she it was who carried on her arm Anton Klöterjahn, junior, that healthy little Anton. Yes, there he was, and nobody could deny that he was healthy even to excess. Pink and white and plump and fragrant, in fresh and immaculate attire, he rested heavily upon the bare red arm of his bebraided body-servant, consumed huge quantities of milk and chopped beef, shouted and screamed, and in every way surrendered himself to his instincts.

Our author from the window of his chamber had seen him arrive. With a peculiar gaze, both veiled and piercing, he fixed young Anton with his eye as he was carried from the carriage into the house. He stood there a long time with the same expression on his face.

Herr Spinell was sitting in his room "at work".

His room was like all the others at Einfried—old-fashioned, simple, and distinguished. The massive chest of drawers was mounted with brass lions' heads; the tall mirror on the wall was not a single surface, but made up of many little panes set in lead. There was no carpet on the polished blue paved floor, the stiff legs of the furniture prolonged themselves on it in clear-cut shadows. A spacious writing-table stood at the window, across whose panes the author had drawn the folds of a yellow curtain, in all probability that he might feel more retired.

In the yellow twilight he bent over the table and wrote—wrote one of those numerous letters which he sent weekly to the post and to which, quaintly enough, he seldom or never received an answer. A large, thick quire of paper lay before him, in whose upper left-hand corner was a curious involved drawing of a landscape and the name Detlev Spinell in the very latest thing in lettering. He was covering the page with a small, painfully neat, and punctiliously traced script.

"Sir:" he wrote, "I address the following lines to you because I cannot help it; because what I have to say so fills and shakes and tortures me, the words come in such a rush, that I should choke if I did not take this means to relieve myself."

If the truth were told, this about the rush of words was quite simply wide of the fact. And God knows what sort of vanity it was made Herr Spinell put it down. For his words did not come in a rush; they came with such pathetic slowness, considering the man was a writer by trade, you would have drawn the conclusion, watching him, that a writer is one to whom writing comes harder than to anybody else.

He held between two finger-tips one of those curious downy hairs he had on his cheek, and twirled it round and round, whole quarter-hours at a time, gazing into space and not coming forwards by a single line; then wrote a few words, daintily, and stuck again. Yet so much was true: that what had managed to get written sounded fluent and vigorous, though the matter was odd enough, even almost equivocal, and at times impossible to follow.

"I feel," the letter went on, "an imperative necessity to make you see what I see; to show you through my eyes, illuminated by the same power of language that clothes them for me, all the things which have stood before my inner eye for weeks, like an indelible

vision. It is my habit to yield to the impulse which urges me to put my own experiences into flamingly right and unforgettable words and to give them to the world. And therefore hear me.

"I will do no more than relate what has been and what is: I will merely tell a story, a brief, unspeakably touching story, without comment, blame, or passing of judgment; simply in my own words. It is the story of Gabriele Eckhof, of the woman whom you, sir, call your wife—and mark you this: it is your story, it happened to you, yet it will be I who will for the first time lift it for you to the level of an experience.

"Do you remember the garden, the old, overgrown garden behind the grey patrician house? The moss was green in the crannies of its weather-beaten wall, and behind the wall dreams and neglect held sway. Do you remember the fountain in the centre? The pale mauve lilies leaned over its crumbling rim, the little stream prattled softly as it fell upon the riven paving. The summer day was drawing to its close.

"Seven maidens sat circlewise round the fountain; but the seventh, or rather the first and only one, was not like the others, for the sinking sun seemed to be weaving a queenly coronal among her locks. Her eyes were like troubled dreams, and yet her pure lips wore a smile.

"They were singing. They lifted their little faces to the leaping streamlet and watched its charming curve droop earthward—their music hovered round it as it leaped and danced. Perhaps their slim hands were folded in their laps the while they sang.

"Can you, sir, recall the scene? Or did you ever see it? No, you saw it not. Your eyes were not formed to see it nor your ears to catch the chaste music of their song. You saw it not, or else you would have forbade your lungs to breathe, your heart to beat. You must have turned aside and gone back to your own life, taking with you what you had seen to preserve it in the depth of your soul to the end of your earthly life, a sacred and inviolable relic. But what did you do?

"That scene, sir, was an end and culmination. Why did you come to spoil it, to give it a sequel, to turn it into the channels of ugly and commonplace life? It was a peaceful apotheosis and a moving, bathed in a sunset beauty of decadence, decay and death. An ancient stock, too exhausted and refined for life and action,

stood there at the end of its days; its latest manifestations were those of art: violin notes, full of that melancholy understanding which is ripeness for death. . . . Did you look into her eyes—those eyes where tears so often stood, lured by the dying sweetness of the violin? Her six friends may have had souls that belonged to life; but hers, the queen's and sister's, death and beauty had claimed for their own.

"You saw it, that deathly beauty; saw, and coveted. The sight of that touching purity moved you with no awe or trepidation. And it was not enough for you to see, you must possess, you must use, you must desecrate. . . . It was the refinement of a choice you made—you are a gourmand, sir, a plebeian gourmand, a peasant with taste.

"Once more let me say that I have no wish to offend you. What I have just said is not an affront; it is a statement, a simple, psychological statement of your simple personality—a personality which for literary purposes is entirely uninteresting. I make the statement solely because I feel an impulse to clarify for you your own thoughts and actions; because it is my inevitable task on this earth to call things by their right names, to make them speak, to illuminate the unconscious. The world is full of what I call the unconscious type, and I cannot endure it; I cannot endure all these unconscious types! I cannot bear all this dull, uncomprehending, unperceiving living and behaving, this world of maddening naïveté about me! It tortures me until I am driven irresistibly to set it all in relief, in the round, to explain, express, and make self-conscious everything in the world --so far as my powers will reach --quite unhampered by the result, whether it be for good or evil, whether it brings consolation and healing or piles grief on grief.

"You, sir, as I said, are a plebeian gourmand, a peasant with taste. You stand upon an extremely low evolutionary level; your own constitution is coarse-fibred. But wealth and a sedentary habit of life have brought about in you a corruption of the nervous system, as sudden as it is unhistoric; and this corruption has been accompanied by a lascivious refinement in your choice of gratifications. It is altogether possible that the muscles of your gullet began to contract, as at the sight of some particularly rare dish, when you conceived the idea of making Gabriele Eckhof your own.

"In short, you lead her idle will astray, you beguile her out of

that moss-grown garden into the ugliness of life, you give her your own vulgar name and make of her a married woman, a housewife, a mother. You take that deathly beauty—spent, aloof, flowering in lofty unconcern of the uses of this world—and debase it to the service of common things, you sacrifice it to that stupid, contemptible, clumsy graven image we call 'nature'—and not the faintest suspicion of the vileness of your conduct visits your peasant soul.

"Again. What is the result? This being, whose eyes are like troubled dreams, she bears you a child; and so doing she endows the new life, a gross continuation of its author's own, with all the blood, all the physical energy she possesses—and she dies. She dies, sir! And if she does not go hence with your vulgarity upon her head; if at the very last she has lifted herself out of the depths of degradation, and passes in an ecstasy, with the deathly kiss of beauty on her brow—well, it is I, sir, who have seen to that! You, meanwhile, were probably spending your time with chambermaids in dark corners.

"But your son, Gabriele Eckhof's son, is alive; he is living and flourishing. Perhaps he will continue in the way of his father, become a well-fed, trading, tax-paying citizen; a capable, philistine pillar of society; in any case, a tone-deaf, normally functioning individual, responsible, sturdy, and stupid, troubled by not a doubt.

"Kindly permit me to tell you, sir, that I hate you. I hate you and your child, as I hate the life of which you are the representative: cheap, ridiculous, but yet triumphant life, the everlasting antipodes and deadly enemy of beauty. I cannot say I despise you—for I am honest. You are stronger than I. I have no armour for the struggle between us, I have only the Word, avenging weapon of the weak. Today I have availed myself of this weapon. This letter is nothing but an act of revenge—you see how honourable I am—and if any word of mine is sharp and bright and beautiful enough to strike home, to make you feel the presence of a power you do not know, to shake even a minute your robust equilibrium, I shall rejoice indeed.—DETLEV SPINELL."

And Herr Spinell put this screed into an envelope, applied a stamp and a many-flourished address, and committed it to the post.

Herr Klöterjahn knocked on Herr Spinell's door. He carried a

sheet of paper in his hand covered with neat script, and he looked like a man bent on energetic action. The post office had done its duty, the letter had taken its appointed way. It had travelled from Einfried to Einfried and reached the hand for which it was meant. It was now four o'clock in the afternoon.

Herr Kloterjahn's entry found Herr Spinell sitting on the sofa reading his own novel with the appalling cover-design. He rose and gave his caller a surprised and inquiring look, though at the same time he distinctly flushed.

"Good afternoon," said Herr Kloterjahn. "Pardon the interruption. But may I ask if you wrote this?" He held up in his left hand the sheet inscribed with fine clear characters and struck it with the back of his right and made it crackle. Then he stuffed that hand into the pocket of his easy-fitting trousers, put his head on one side, and opened his mouth, in a way some people have, to listen.

Herr Spinell, curiously enough, smiled. He smiled engagingly, with a rather confused, apologetic air. He put his hand to his head as though trying to recollect himself, and said

"Ah!—yes, quite right, I took the liberty

The fact was, he had given in to his natural man today and slept neatly up to midday, with the result that he was suffering from a bad conscience and a heavy head, was nervous and incapable of putting up a fight. And the spring air made him limp and good for nothing. So much we must say in extenuation of the utterly silly figure he cut in the interview which followed.

"Ah? Indeed! Very good!" said Herr Kloterjahn. He dug his chin into his chest, elevated his brows, stretched his arms, and indulged in various other antics by way of getting down to business after his introductory question. But unfortunately he so much enjoyed the figure he cut that he rather overshot the mark and the rest of the scene hardly lived up to this preliminary pantomime. However, Herr Spinell went rather pale.

"Very good!" repeated Herr Kloterjahn. "Then permit me to give you an answer in person, it strikes me as idiotic to write pages of letter to a person when you can speak to him any hour of the day."

"Well, idiotic..." Herr Spinell said, with his apologetic smile. He sounded almost meek.

"Idiotic!" repeated Herr Klöterjahn, nodding violently in token of the soundness of his position. "And I should not demean myself to answer this scrawl; to tell the truth, I should have thrown it away at once if I had not found in it the explanation of certain changes—however, that is no affair of yours, and has nothing to do with the thing anyhow. I am a man of action, I have other things to do than to think about your unspeakable visions."

"I wrote '*indelible vision*,'" said Herr Spinell, drawing himself up. This was the only moment at which he displayed a little self-respect.

"Indelible, unspeakable," responded Herr Klöterjahn, referring to the text. "You write a villainous hand, sir; you would not get a position in my office, let me tell you. It looks clear enough at first, but when you come to study it, it is full of shakes and quavers. But that is your affair, it's no business of mine. What I have come to say to you is that you are a tomfool—which you probably know already. Furthermore, you are a cowardly sneak; I don't suppose I have to give the evidence for that either. My wife wrote me once that when you meet a woman you don't look her square in the face, but just give her a side squint, so as to carry away a good impression, because you are afraid of the reality. I should probably have heard more of the same sort of stories about you, only unfortunately she stopped mentioning you. But this is the kind of thing you are: you talk so much about 'beauty'; you are all chicken-livered hy:acri:y and cant—which is probably at the bottom of your impudent allusion to out-of-the-way corners too. That ought to crush me, of course, but it just makes me laugh—it doesn't do a thing but make m laugh! Understand? Have I clarified your thoughts and actions for you, you pitiable object, you? Thought of course it is not my invariable calling—"

"'*Inevitable*' was the word I used," Herr Spinell said; but he did not insist on the point. He stood there, crestfallen, like a big, unhappy, chidden, grey-haired schoolboy.

"Invariable or inevitable, whichever you like—anyhow you are a contemptible cur, and that I tell you. You see me every day at table, you bow and smirk and say good-morning—and one fine day you send me a scrawl full of idiotic abuse. Yes, you've a lot of courage—on paper! And it's not only this ridiculous letter—you have been intriguing behind my back. I can see that now. Though

you need not flatter yourself it did any good. If you imagine you put any ideas into my wife's head you never were more mistaken in your life. And if you think she behaved any different when we came from what she always does, then you just put the cap on to your own foolishness. She did not kiss the little chap, that's true, but it was only a precaution, because they have the idea now that the trouble is with her lungs, and in such cases you can't tell whether—though that still remains to be proved, no matter what you say with your 'She dies, sir,' you silly ass!"

Here Herr Klöterjahn paused for breath. He was in a furious passion; he kept stabbing the air with his right forefinger and crumpling the sheet of paper in his other hand. His face, between the blond English mutton-chops, was frightfully red and his dark brow was rent with swollen veins like lightnings of scorn.

"You hate me," he went on, "and you would despise me if I were not stronger than you. Yes, you're right there! I've got my heart in the right place, by God, and you've got yours mostly in the seat of your trousers. I would most certainly hack you into bits if it weren't against the law, you and your gabble about the 'Word', you skulking fool! But I have no intention of putting up with your insults; and when I show this part about the vulgar name to my lawyer at home, you will very likely get a little surprise. My name, sir, is a first-rate name, and I have made it so by my own efforts. You know better than I do whether anybody would ever lend you a penny piece on yours, you lazy lout! The law defends people against the kind you are! You are a common danger, you are enough to drive a body crazy! But you're left this time, my master! I don't let individuals like you get the best of me so fast! I've got my heart in the right place—"

Herr Klöterjahn's excitement had really reached a pitch. He shrieked, he bellowed, over and over again, that his heart was in the right place.

"They were singing,' Exactly. Well, they weren't. They were knitting. And if I heard what they said, it was about a recipe for potato pancakes; and when I show my father-in-law that about the old decayed family you'll probably have a libel suit on your hands. 'Did you see the picture?' Yes, of course I saw it; only I don't see why that should make me hold my breath and run away. I don't leer at women out of the corner of my eye; I look at them

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square, and if I like their looks I go for them. I have my heart in the right place—"

Somebody knocked. Knocked eight or ten times, quite fast, one after the other—a sudden, alarming little commotion that made Herr Klöterjahn pause; and an unsteady voice that kept tripping over itself in its haste and distress said:

"Herr Klöterjahn, Herr Klöterjahn—oh, is Herr Klöterjahn there?"

"Stop outside," said Herr Klöterjahn, in a growl. . . . "What's the matter? I'm busy talking."

"Oh, Herr Klöterjahn," said the quaking, breaking voice, "you must come! The doctors are there too—oh, it is all so dreadfully sad—"

He took one step to the door and tore it open. Frau Magistrate Spatz was standing there. She had her handkerchief before her mouth, and great egg-shaped tears rolled into it, two by two.

"Herr Klöterjahn," she got out. "It is so frightfully sad. . . . She has brought up so much blood, such a horrible lot of blood. . . . She was sitting up quite quietly in bed and humming a little snatch of music . . . and there it came . . . my God, such a quantity you never saw. . . ."

"Is she dead?" yelled Herr Klöterjahn. As he spoke he clutched the Rätin by the arm and pulled her to and fro on the sill. "Not quite? Not dead; she can see me, can't she? Brought up a little blood again, from the lung, eh? Yes, I give in, it may be from the lung, Gabriele!" he suddenly cried out, and his eyes filled with tears; you could see what a burst of good, warm, honest human feeling came over him. "Yes, I'm coming," he said and dragged the Rätin after him as he went with long strides down the corridor. You could still hear his voice, from quite a distance, sounding fainter and fainter: "Not quite, eh? From the lung?"

Herr Spinell stood still on the spot where he had stood during the whole of Herr Klöterjahn's rudely interrupted call and looked out the open door. At length he took a couple of steps and listened down the corridor. But all was quiet, so he closed the door and came back into the room.

He looked at himself awhile in the glass, then he went up to the writing-table, took a little flask and a glass out of a drawer,

and drank a cognac—for which nobody can blame him. Then he stretched himself out on the sofa and closed his eyes.

The upper half of the window was down. Outside in the garden birds were twittering, those dainty, saucy little notes held all the spring, finely and penetratingly expressed. Herr Spinell spoke once: "*Invariable calling*," he said, and moved his head and drew in the air through his teeth as though his nerves pained him violently.

Impossible to recover any poise or tranquillity. Crude experiences like this were too much—he was not made for them. By a sequence of emotions, the analysis of which would lead us too far afield, Herr Spinell arrived at the decision that it would be well for him to have a little out-of-doors exercise. He took his hat and went downstairs.

As he left the house and issued into the mild, fragrant air, he turned his head and lifted his eyes, slowly, scanning the house until he reached one of the windows, a curtained window, on which his gaze rested awhile, fixed and somber. Then he laid his hands on his back and moved away across the gravel path. He moved in deep thought.

The beds were still straw covered, the trees and bushes bare, but the snow was gone, the path was only damp in spots. The large garden with its grottoes, bowers and little pavilions lay in the splendid colourful afternoon light, strong shadow and rich, golden sun, and the dark network of branches stood out sharp and articulate against the bright sky.

It was about that hour of the afternoon when the sun takes shape, and from being a formless volume of light turns to a visibly sinking disk, whose milder, more saturated glow the eye can tolerate. Herr Spinell did not see the sun, the direction the path took hid it from his view. He walked with bent head and hummed a strain of music, a short phrase, a figure that mounted wailingly and complainingly upward—the *Sehnsuchtsmotiv*. . . . But suddenly, with a start, a quick, jerky intake of breath, he stopped, as though rooted to the path, and gazed straight ahead of him, with brows fiercely gathered, staring eyes, and an expression of horrified repulsion.

The path had curved just here, he was facing the setting sun. It stood large and slantwise in the sky, crossed by two narrow

strips of gold-rimmed cloud; it set the tree-tops aglow and poured its red-gold radiance across the garden. And there, erect in the path, in the midst of the glory, with the sun's mighty aureola above her head, there confronted him an exuberant figure, all arrayed in red and gold and plaid. She had one hand on her swelling hip, with the other she moved to and fro the graceful little perambulator. And in this perambulator sat the child—sat Anton Klöterjahn, junior, Gabriele Eckhof's fat son.

There he sat among his cushions, in a woolly white jacket and large white hat, plump-checked, well cared for, and magnificent; and his blithe unerring gaze encountered Herr Spinell's. The novelist pulled himself together. Was he not a man, had he not the power to pass this unexpected, sun-kindled apparition there in the path and continue on his walk? But Anton Klöterjahn began to laugh and shout—most horrible to see. He squealed, he crowed with inconceivable delight—it was positively uncanny to hear him.

God knows what had taken him; perhaps the sight of Herr Spinell's long, black figure set him off; perhaps an attack of sheer animal spirits gave rise to his wild outburst of merriment. He had a bone teething-ring in one hand and a tin rattle in the other; and these two objects he flung aloft with shoutings, shook them to and fro, and clashed them together in the air, as though purposely to frighten Herr Spinell. His eyes were almost shut, his mouth gaped open till all the rosy gums were displayed; and as he shouted he rolled his head about in excess of mirth.

Herr Spinell turned round and went thence. Pursued by the youthful Klöterjahn's joyous screams, he went away across the gravel, walking stiffly, yet not without grace; his gait was the hesitating gait of one who would disguise the fact that, inwardly, he is running away.

GLADIUS DEI

MUNICH WAS radiant. Above the gay squires and white columned temples, the classicistic monuments and the baroque churches, the leaping fountains, the palaces and parks of the Residence there stretched a sky of luminous blue silk. Well arranged leafy vistas laced with sun and shade lay basking in the sunshine of a beautiful day in early June.

There was a twittering of birds and a blithe holiday spirit in all the little streets. And in the squares and past the rows of villas there swelled, rolled, and hummed the leisurely, entertaining traffic of that easy going, charming town. Travellers of all nationalities drove about in the slow little dioshkies, looking right and left in aimless curiosity at the house fronts, they mounted and descended museum stairs. Many windows stood open and music was heard from within practising on piano, cello, or violin—earnest and well meant amateur efforts, while from the Odeon came the sound of serious work on several grand pianos.

Young people, the kind that can whistle the Nothung motif, who fill the pit of the Schauspielhaus every evening, wandered in and out of the University and Library with literary magazines in their coat pockets. A court carriage stood before the Academy, the home of the plastic arts, which spreads its white wings between the Turkenstrasse and the Siegestor. And colourful groups of models, picturesque old men, women and children in Albanian costume, stood or lounged at the top of the balustrade.

Indolent, unhurried sauntering was the mode in all the long streets of the northern quarter. There life is lived for pleasanter ends than the driving greed of gain. Young artists with little

round hats on the backs of their heads, flowing cravats and no canes—carefree bachelors who paid for their lodgings with colour-sketches—were strolling up and down to let the clear blue morning play upon their mood, also to look at the little girls, the pretty, rather plump type, with the brunette bandeaux, the too large feet, and the unobjectionable morals. Every fifth house had studio windows blinking in the sun. Sometimes a fine piece of architecture stood out from a middle-class row, the work of some imaginative young architect; a wide front with shallow bays and decorations in a bizarre style very expressive and full of invention. Or the door to some monotonous façade would be framed in a bold improvisation of flowing lines and sunny colours, with bacchantes, naiads, and rosy-skinned nudes.

It was always a joy to linger before the windows of the cabinet-makers and the shops for modern articles *de luxe*. What a sense for luxurious nothings and amusing, significant line was displayed in the shape of everything! Little shops that sold picture-frames, sculptures, and antiques there were in endless number; in their windows you might see those busts of Florentine women of the Renaissance, so full of noble poise and poignant charm. And the owners of the smallest and meanest of these shops spoke of Mino da Fiesole and Donatello as though he had received the rights of reproduction from them personally.

But on the Odeonsplatz, in view of the mighty loggia with the spacious mosaic pavement before it, diagonally opposite to the Regent's palace, people were crowding round the large windows and glass show-cases of the big art-shop owned by M. Blüthenzweig. What a glorious display! There were reproductions of the masterpieces of all the galleries in the world, in costly decorated and tinted frames, the good taste of which was precious in its very simplicity. There were copies of modern paintings, works of a joyously sensuous fantasy, in which the antiques seemed born again in humorous and realistic guise; bronze nudes and fragile ornamental glassware; tall, thin earthenware vases with an iridescent glaze produced by a bath in metal steam; *éditions de luxe* which were triumphs of modern binding and presswork, containing the works of the most modish poets, set out with every possible advantage of sumptuous elegance. Cheek by jowl with these, the portraits of artists, musicians, philosophers, actors, writers,

displayed to gratify the public taste for personalities.—In the first window, next the book-shop, a large picture stood on an easel, with a crowd of people in front of it, a fine sepia photograph in a wide old-gold frame, a very striking reproduction of the sensation at this year's great international exhibition, to which public attention is always invited by means of effective and artistic posters stuck up everywhere on hoardings among concert programmes and clever advertisements of toilet preparations.

If you looked into the windows of the book-shop your eye met such titles as *Interior Decoration Since the Renaissance*, *The Renaissance in Modern Decorative Art*, *The Book as Work of Art*, *The Decorative Arts*, *Hunger for Art*, and many more. And you would remember that these thought-provoking pamphlets were sold and read by the thousand and that discussions on these subjects were the preoccupation of all the salons.

You might be lucky enough to meet in person one of the famous fair ones whom less fortunate folk know only through the medium of art; one of those rich and beautiful women whose Titian-blond colouring Nature's most sweet and cunning hand did not lay on, but whose diamond parures and beguiling charms had received immortality from the hand of some portrait-painter of genius and whose love-affairs were the talk of the town. These were the queens of the artist balls at carnival-time. They were a little painted, a little made up, full of haughty caprices, worthy of adoration, avid of praise. You might see a carriage rolling up the Ludwigstrasse, with such a great painter and his mistress inside. People would be pointing out the sight, standing still to gaze after the pair. Some of them would curtsy. A little more and the very policemen would stand at attention.

Art flourished, art swayed the destinies of the town, art stretched above it her rose-bound sceptre and smiled. On every hand obsequious interest was displayed in her prosperity, on every hand she was served with industry and devotion. There was a downright cult of line, decoration, form, significance, beauty. Munich was radiant.

A youth was coming down the Schellingstrasse. With the bells of cyclists ringing about him he strode across the wooden pavement towards the broad façade of the Ludwigskirche. Looking

at him it was as though a shadow passed across the sky, or cast over the spirit some memory of melancholy hours. Did he not love the sun which bathed the lovely city in its festal light? Why did he walk wrapped in his own thoughts, his eyes directed on the ground?

No one in that tolerant and variety-loving town would have taken offence at his wearing no hat; but why need the hood of his ample black cloak have been drawn over his head, shadowing his low, prominent, and peaked forehead, covering his ears and framing his haggard cheeks? What pangs of conscience, what scruples and self-tortures had so availed to hollow out these cheeks? It is frightful, on such a sunny day, to see care sitting in the hollows of the human face. His dark brows thickened at the narrow base of his hooked and prominent nose. His lips were unpleasantly full, his eyes brown and close-lying. When he lifted them, diagonal folds appeared on the peaked brow. His gaze expressed knowledge, limitation, and suffering. Seen in profile his face was strikingly like an old painting preserved at Florence in a narrow cloister cell whence once a frightful and shattering protest issued against life and her triumphs.

Hieronymus walked along the Schellingstrasse with a slow, firm stride, holding his wide cloak together with both hands from inside. Two little girls, two of those pretty, plump little creatures with the bandeaux, the big feet, and the unobjectionable morals, strolled towards him arm in arm, on pleasure bent. They poked each other and laughed, they bent double with laughter, they even broke into a run and ran away still laughing, at his hood and his face. But he paid them no heed. With bent head, looking neither to the right nor to the left, he crossed the Ludwigstrasse and mounted the church steps.

The great wings of the middle portal stood wide open. From somewhere within the consecrated twilight, cool, dank, incense-laden, there came a pale red glow. An old woman with inflamed eyes rose from a prayer-stool and slipped on crutches through the columns. Otherwise the church was empty.

Hieronymus sprinkled brow and breast at the stoup, bent the knee before the high altar, and then paused in the centre nave. Here in the church his stature seemed to have grown. He stood upright and immovable; his head was flung up and his great

hooked nose jutted domineeringly above the thick lips. His eyes no longer sought the ground, but looked straight and boldly into the distance, at the crucifix on the high altar. Thus he stood awhile, then retreating he bent the knee again and left the church.

He strode up the Ludwigstrasse, slowly, firmly, with bent head, in the centre of the wide unpaved road, towards the mighty loggia with its statues. But arrived at the Odeonsplatz, he looked up, so that the folds came out on his peaked forehead, and checked his step, his attention being called to the crowd at the windows of the big art-shop of M. Bluthenzweig.

People moved from window to window, pointing out to each other the treasures displayed and exchanging views as they looked over one another's shoulders. Hieronymus mingled among them and did as they did, taking in all these things with his eyes, one by one.

He saw the reproductions of masterpieces from all the galleries in the world, the priceless frames so precious in their simplicity, the Renaissance sculpture, the bronze nudes, the exquisitely bound volumes, the iridescent vases, the portraits of artists, musicians, philosophers, actors, writers; he looked at everything and turned a moment of his scrutiny upon each object. Holding his mantle closely together with both hands from inside, he moved his hood-covered head in short turns from one thing to the next, gazing at each awhile with a dull, inimical, and remotely surprised air, lifting the dark brows which grew so thick at the base of the nose. At length he stood in front of the last window, which contained the startling picture. For a while he looked over the shoulders of people before him and then in his turn reached a position directly in front of the window.

The large red-brown photograph in the choice old-gold frame stood on an easel in the centre. It was a Madonna, but an utterly unconventional one, a work of entirely modern feeling. The figure of the Holy Mother was revealed as enchantingly feminine and beautiful. Her great smouldering eyes were rimmed with darkness, and her delicate and strangely smiling lips were half-parted. Her slender fingers held in a somewhat nervous grasp the hips of the Child, a nude boy of pronounced, almost primitive leanness. He was playing with her breast and glancing aside at the beholder with a wise look in his eyes.

Two other youths stood near Hieronymus, talking about the picture. They were two young men with books under their arms, which they had fetched from the Library or were taking thither. Humanistically educated people, that is, equipped with science and with art.

"The little chap is in luck, devil take me!" said one.

"He seems to be trying to make one envious," replied the other. "A bewildering female!"

"A female to drive a man crazy! Gives you funny ideas about the Immaculate Conception."

"No, she doesn't look exactly immaculate. Have you seen the original?"

"Of course; I was quite bowled over. She makes an even more aphrodisaic impression in colour. Especially the eyes."

"The likeness is pretty plain."

"How so?"

"Don't you know the model? Of course he used his little dress-maker. It is almost a portrait, only with a lot more emphasis on the corruptible. The girl is more innocent."

"I hope so. Life would be altogether too much of a strain if there were many like this *mater amata*."

"The Pinakothek has bought it."

"Really? Well, well! They knew what they were about, anyhow. The treatment of the flesh and the flow of the linen garment are really first-class."

"Yes, an incredibly gifted chap."

"Do you know him?"

"A little. He will have a career, 'hat is certain. He has been invited twice by the Prince Regent."

This last was said as they were taking leave of each other.

"Shall I see you this evening at the theatre?" asked the first. "The Dramatic Club is giving Machiavelli's *Mandragola*."

"Oh, bravo! That will be great, of course, I had meant to go to the Variété, but I shall probably choose our stout Niccolo after all. Good-bye."

They parted, going off to right and left. New people took their places and looked at the famous picture. But Hieronymus stood where he was, motionless, with his head thrust out; his hands clutched convulsively at the mantle as they held it together from

inside. His brows were no longer lifted with that cool and unpleasantly surprised expression; they were drawn and darkened; his cheeks, half-shrouded in the black hood, seemed more sunken than ever and his thick lips had gone pale. Slowly his head dropped lower and lower, so that finally his eyes stared upwards at the work of art, while the nostrils of his great nose dilated.

Thus he remained for perhaps a quarter of an hour. The crowd about him melted away, but he did not stir from the spot. At last he turned slowly on the balls of his feet and went thence.

But the picture of the Madonna went with him. Always and ever, whether in his hard and narrow little room or kneeling in the cool church, it stood before his outraged soul, with its smouldering, dark-rimmed eyes, its riddlingly smiling lips—stark and beautiful. And no prayer availed to exorcize it.

But the third night it happened that a command and summons from on high came to Hieronymus, to intercede and lift his voice against the frivolity, blasphemy, and arrogance of beauty. In vain like Moses he protested that he had not the gift of tongues. God's will remained unshaken; in a loud voice He demanded that the faint-hearted Hieronymus go forth to sacrifice amid the jeers of the loc.

And since God would have it so, he set forth one morning and wended his way to the great art-shop of M. Blüthenzweig. He wore his hood over his head and held his mantle together in front from inside with both hands as he went.

The air had grown heavy, the sky was livid and thunder threatened. Once more crowds were besieging the show-cases at the art-shop and especially the window where the photograph of the Madonna stood. Hieronymus cast one brief glance thither; then he pushed up the latch of the glass door hung with placards and art magazines. "As God wills," said he, and entered the shop.

A young girl was somewhere at a desk writing in a big book. She was a pretty brunette thing with bandeaux of hair and big feet. She came up to him and asked pleasantly what he would like.

"Thank you," said Hieronymus in a low voice and looked her earnestly in the face, with diagonal wrinkles in his peaked brow. "I would speak not to you but to the owner of this shop, Herr Blüthenzweig."

She hesitated a little, turned away, and took up her work once more. He stood there in the middle of the shop.

Instead of the single specimens in the show-windows there were here a riot and a heaping-up of luxury, a fullness of colour, line, form, style, invention, good taste, and beauty. Hieronymus looked slowly round him, drawing his mantle close with both hands.

There were several people in the shop besides him. At one of the broad tables running across the room sat a man in a yellow suit, with a black goat's-beard, looking at a portfolio of French drawings, over which he now and then emitted a bleating laugh. He was being waited on by an undernourished and vegetarian young man, who kept on dragging up fresh portfolios. Diagonally opposite the bleating man sat an elegant old dame, examining art embroideries with a pattern of fabulous flowers in pale tones standing together on tall perpendicular stalks. An attendant hovered about her too. A leisurely Englishman in a travelling-cap, with his pipe in his mouth, sat at another table. Cold and smooth-shaven, of indefinite age, in his good English clothes, he sat examining bronzes brought to him by M. Blüthenzweig in person. He was holding up by the head the dainty figure of a nude young girl, immature and delicately articulated, her hands crossed in coquettish innocence upon her breast. He studied her thoroughly, turning her slowly about. M. Blüthenzweig, a man with a short, heavy brown beard and bright brown eyes of exactly the same colour, moved in a semicircle round him, rubbing his hands, praising the statuette with all the terms his vocabulary possessed.

"A hundred and fifty marks, sir," he said in English. "Munich art—very charming, in fact. Simply full of charm, you know. Grace itself. Really extremely pretty, good, admirable, in fact." Then he thought of some more and went on. "Highly attractive, fascinating." Then he began again from the beginning.

His nose lay a little flat on his upper lip, so that he breathed constantly with a slight sniff into his moustache. Sometimes he did this as he approached a customer, stooping over as though he were smelling at him. When Hieronymus entered, M. Blüthenzweig had examined him cursorily in this way, then devoted himself again to his Englishman.

The elegant old dame made her selection and left the shop. A

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man entered. M. Blüthenzweig sniffed briefly at him as though to scent out his capacity to buy and left him to the young book-keeper. The man purchased a faience bust of young Piero de' Medici, son of Lorenzo, and went out again. The Englishman began to depart. He had acquired the statuette of the young girl and left amid bowings from M. Blüthenzweig. Then the art-dealer turned to Hieronymus and came forward.

"You wanted something?" he said, without any particular courtesy.

Hieronymus held his cloak together with both hands and looked the other in the face almost without winking an eyelash. He parted his big lips slowly and said :

"I have come to you on account of the picture in the window there, the big photograph, the Madonna." His voice was thick and without modulation.

"Yes, quite right," said M. Blüthenzweig briskly and began rubbing his hands. "Seventy marks in the frame. It is unfadable—a first-class reproduction. Highly attractive and full of charm."

Hieronymus was silent. He nodded his head in the hood and shrank a little into himself as the dealer spoke. Then he drew himself up again and said :

"I would remark to you first of all that I am not in the position to purchase anything, nor have I the desire. I am sorry to have to disappoint your expectations. I regret if it upsets you. But in the first place I am poor and in the second I do not love the things you sell. No, I cannot buy anything."

"No? Well, then?" asked M. Blüthenzweig, sniffing a good deal. "Then may I ask—"

"I suppose," Hieronymus went on, "that being what you are you look down on me because I am not in a position to buy."

"Oh—er—not at all," said M. Blüthenzweig. "Not at all. Only—"

"And yet I beg you to hear me and give some consideration to my words."

"Consideration to your words. H'm—may I ask—"

"You may ask," said Hieronymus, "and I will answer you. I have come to beg you to remove that picture, the big photograph, the Madonna, out of your window and never display it again."

M. Blüthenzweig looked awhile dumbly into Hieronymus's

face—as though he expected him to be abashed at the words he had just uttered. But as this did not happen he gave a violent sniff and spoke himself :

"Will you be so good as to tell me whether you are here in any official capacity which authorizes you to dictate to me, or what does bring you here?"

"Oh, no," replied Hieronymus, "I have neither office nor dignity from the state. I have no power on my side, sir. What brings me hither is my conscience alone."

M. Blüthenzweig, searching for words, snorted violently into his moustache. At length he said :

"Your conscience . . . well, you will kindly understand that I take not the faintest interest in your conscience." With which he turned round and moved quickly to his desk at the back of the shop, where he began to write. Both attendants laughed heartily. The pretty Fräulein giggled over her account-book. As for the yellow gentleman with the goat's beard, he was evidently a foreigner, for he gave no sign of comprehension but went on studying the French drawings and emitting from time to time his bleating laugh.

"Just get rid of the man for me," said M. Blüthenzweig shortly over his shoulder to his assistant. He went on writing. The poorly paid young vegetarian approached Hieronymus, smothering his laughter, and the other salesman came up too.

"May we be of service to you in any other way?" the first asked mildly. Hieronymus fixed him with his glazed and suffering eyes.

"No," he said, "you cannot. I beg you to take the Madonna picture out of the window, at once and for ever."

"But --why?"

"It is the Holy Mother of God," said Hieronymus in a subdued voice.

"Quite. But you have heard that Herr Bluthenzweig is not inclined to accede to your request."

"We must bear in mind that it is the Holy Mother of God," said Hieronymus again and his head trembled on his neck.

"So we must. But should we not be allowed to exhibit any Madonnas—or paint any?"

"It is not that," said Hieronymus, almost whispering. He drew

himself up and shook his head energetically several times. His peaked brow under the hood was entirely furrowed with long, deep cross-folds. "You know very well that it is vice itself that is painted there—naked sensuality. I was standing near two simple young people and overheard with my own ears that it led them astray upon the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception."

"Oh, permit me—that is not the point," said the young salesman, smiling. In his leisure hours he was writing a brochure on the modern movement in art and was well qualified to conduct a cultured conversation. "The picture is a work of art," he went on, "and one must measure it by the appropriate standards as such. It has been very highly praised on all hands. The state has purchased it."

"I know that the state has purchased it," said Hieronymus. "I also know that the artist has twice dined with the Prince Regent. It is common talk—and God knows how people interpret the fact that a man can become famous by such work as this. What does such a fact bear witness to? To the blindness of the world, a blindness inconceivable, if not indeed shamelessly hypocritical. This picture has its origin in sensual lust and is enjoyed in the same—is that true or not? Answer me! And you too answer me, Herr Bluthenzweig!"

A pause ensued. Hieronymus seemed in all seriousness to demand an answer to his question, looking by turns at the staring attendants and the round back M. Bluthenzweig turned upon him, with his own piercing and anguishing brown eyes. Silence reigned. Only the yellow man with the goat's beard, bending over the French drawings, broke it with his bleating laugh.

"It is true," Hieronymus went on in a hoarse voice that shook with his profound indignation. "You do not dare deny it. How then can honour be done to its creator, as though he had endowed mankind with a new ideal possession? How can one stand before it and surrender unthinkingly to the base enjoyment which it purveys, persuading oneself in all seriousness that one is yielding to a noble and elevated sentiment, highly creditable to the human race? Is this reckless ignorance or abandoned hypocrisy? My understanding falters, it is completely at a loss when confronted by the absurd fact that a man can achieve renown on this earth by the stupid and shameless exploitation of the animal instincts. Beauty?

What is beauty? What forces are they which use beauty as their tool today—and upon what does it work? No one can fail to know this, Herr Blüthenzweig. But who, understanding it clearly, can fail to feel disgust and pain? It is criminal to play upon the ignorance of the immature, the lewd, the brazen, and the unscrupulous by elevating beauty into an idol to be worshipped, to give it even more power over those who know not affliction and have no knowledge of redemption. You are unknown to me, and you look at me with black looks—yet answer me! Knowledge, I tell you, is the profoundest torture in the world; but it is the purgatory without whose purifying pangs no soul can reach salvation. It is not infantile, blasphemous shallowness that can save us, Herr Blüthenzweig; only knowledge can avail, knowledge in which the passions of our loathsome flesh die away and are quenched.”

Silence.—The yellow man with the goat's beard gave a sudden little bleat.

“I think you really must go now,” said the underpaid assistant mildly.

But Hieronymus made no move to do so. Drawn up in his hooded cape, he stood with blazing eyes in the centre of the shop and his thick lips poured out condemnation in a voice that was harsh and rusty and clanking.

“Art, you cry; enjoyment, beauty! Enfold the world in beauty and endow all things with the noble grace of style!—Profligate, away! Do you think to wash over with lurid colours the misery of the world? Do you think with the sounds of feasting and music to drown out the voice of the tortured earth? Shameless one, you err! God lets not Himself be mocked, and your impudent deification of the glistening surface of things is an abomination in His eyes. You tell me that I blaspheme art. I say to you that you lie. I do not blaspheme art. Art is no conscienceless delusion, lending itself to reinforce the allurements of the fleshly. Art is the holy torch which turns its light upon all the frightful depths, all the shameful and woeful abysses of life; art is the godly fire laid to the world that, being redeemed by pity, it may flame up and dissolve altogether with its shames and torments.—Take it out, Herr Blüthenzweig, take away the work of that famous painter out of your window—you would do well to burn it with a hot fire and strew its ashes to the four winds—yes, to all the four winds—”

His harsh voice broke off. He had taken a violent backwards step, snatched one arm from his black wrappings, and stretched it passionately forth, gesturing towards the window with a hand that shook as though palsied. And in this commanding attitude he paused. His great hooked nose seemed to jut more than ever, his dark brows were gathered so thick and high that folds crowded upon the peaked forehead shaded by the hood; a hectic flush mantled his hollow cheeks.

But at this point M. Blüthenzweig turned round. Perhaps he was outraged by the idea of burning his seventy-mark reproduction; perhaps Hieronymus's speech had completely exhausted his patience. In any case he was a picture of stern and righteous anger. He pointed with his pen to the door of the shop, gave several short, excited snorts into his moustache, struggled for words, and uttered with the maximum of energy those which he found:

"My fine fellow, if you don't get out at once I will have my packer help you—do you understand?"

"Oh, you cannot intimidate me, you cannot drive me away, you cannot silence my voice!" cried Hieronymus as he clutched his cloak over his chest with his fists and shook his head doughtily. "I know that I am single-handed and powerless, but yet I will not cease until you hear me, Herr Blüthenzweig! Take the picture out of your window and burn it even today! Ah, burn not it alone! Burn all these statues and busts, the sight of which plunges the beholder into sin! Burn these vases and ornaments, these shameless revivals of paganism, these elegantly bound volumes of erotic verse! Burn everything in your shop, Herr Blüthenzweig, for it is a filthiness in God's sight. Burn it, burn it!" he shrieked, beside himself, describing a wild, all-embracing circle with his arm. "The harvest is ripe for the reaper, the measure of the age's shamelessness is full—but I say unto you—"

"Krauthuber!" Herr Blüthenzweig raised his voice and shouted towards a door at the back of the shop. "Come in here at once!"

And in answer to the summons there appeared upon the scene a massive overpowering presence, a vast and awe-inspiring, swollen human bulk, whose limbs merged into each other like links of sausage—a gigantic son of the people, malt-nourished and immoderate, who weighed in, with puffings, bursting with energy, from the packing-room. His appearance in the upper reaches of his form

was notable for a fringe of walrus beard; a hide apron fouled with paste covered his body from the waist down, and his yellow shirt-sleeves were rolled back from his heroic arms.

"Will you open the door for this gentleman, Krauthuber?" said M. Blüthenzweig; "and if he should not find the way to it, just help him into the street."

"Huh," said the man, looking from his enraged employer to Hieronymus and back with his little elephant eyes. It was a heavy monosyllable, suggesting reserve force restrained with difficulty. The floor shook with his tread as he went to the door and opened it.

Hieronymus had grown very pale. "Burn—" he shouted once more. He was about to go on when he felt himself turned round by an irresistible power, by a physical preponderance to which no resistance was even thinkable. Slowly and inexorably he was propelled towards the door.

"I am weak," he managed to ejaculate. "My flesh cannot bear the force . . . it cannot hold its ground, no . . . but what does that prove? Burn —"

He stopped. He found himself outside the art-shop. M. Blüthenzweig's giant packer had let him go with one final shove, which set him down on the stone threshold of the shop, supporting himself with one hand. Behind him the door closed with a rattle of glass.

He picked himself up. He stood erect, breathing heavily, and pulled his cloak together with one fist over his breast, letting the other hang down inside. His hollow cheeks had a grey pallor; the nostrils of his great hooked nose opened and closed; his ugly lips were writhen in an expression of hatred and despair and his red-rimmed eyes wandered over the beautiful square like those of a man in a frenzy.

He did not see that people were looking at him with amusement and curiosity. For what he beheld upon the mosaic pavement before the great loggia were all the vanities of this world: the masked costumes of the artist balls, the decorations, vases and art objects, the nude statues, the female busts, the picturesque rebirths of the pagan age, the portraits of famous beauties by the hands of masters, the elegantly bound erotic verse, the art brochures—all these he saw heaped in a pyramid and going up in crackling flames

amid loud exultations from the people enthralled by his own frightful words. A yellow background of cloud had drawn up over the Theatinerstrasse, and from it issued wild rumblings, but what he saw was a burning fiery sword, towering in sulphurous light above the joyous city.

"*Gladius Dei super terram . . .*" his thick lips whispered, and drawing himself still higher in his hooded cloak while the hand hanging down inside it twitched convulsively, he murmured, quaking: "*cito et velociter!*"

TONIO KROGER

THE WINTER sun, poor ghost of itself, hung milky and wan behind layers of cloud above the huddled roofs of the town. In the gabled streets it was wet and windy and there came in gusts a sort of soft hail, not ice, not snow.

School was out. The hosts of the released streamed over the paved court and out at the wrought-iron gate, where they broke up and hastened off right and left. Elder pupils held their books in a strap high on the left shoulder and rowed, right arm against the wind, towards dinner. Small people trotted gaily off, splashing the slush with their feet, the tools of learning rattling amain in their walrus-skin satchels. But one and all pulled off their caps and cast down their eyes in awe before the Olympian hat and ambrosial beard of a master moving homewards with measured stride. . . .

"Ah, there you are at last, Hans," said Tonio Kröger. He had been waiting a long time in the street and went up with a smile to the friend he saw coming out of the gate in talk with other boys and about to go off with them. . . . "What?" said Hans, and looked at Tonio. "Right-oh! We'll take a little walk, then."

Tonio said nothing and his eyes were clouded. Did Hans forget, had he only just remembered that they were to take a walk together today? And he himself had looked forward to it with almost incessant joy.

"Well, good-bye, fellows," said Hans Hansen to his comrades. "I'm taking a walk with Kröger." And the two turned to their left, while the others sauntered off in the opposite direction.

Hans and Tonio had time to take a walk after school because in neither of their families was dinner served before four o'clock.

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Their fathers were prominent business men, who held public office and were of consequence in the town. Hans's people had owned for some generations the big wood-yards down by the river, where powerful machine-saws hissed and spat and cut up timber; while Tonio was the son of Consul Kröger, whose grain-sacks with the firm name in great black letters you might see any day driven through the streets; his large, old ancestral home was the finest house in all the town. The two friends had to keep taking off their hats to their many acquaintances; some folk did not even wait for the fourteen-year-old lads to speak first, as by rights they should.

Both of them carried their satchels across their shoulders and both were well and warmly dressed: Hans in a short sailor jacket, with the wide blue collar of his sailor suit turned out over shoulders and back, and Tonio in a belted grey overcoat. Hans wore a Danish sailor cap with black ribbons, beneath which streamed a shock of straw-coloured hair. He was uncommonly handsome and well built, broad in the shoulders and narrow in the hips, with keen, far-apart, steel-blue eyes; while beneath Tonio's round fur cap was a brunette face with the finely chiselled features of the south; the dark eyes, with delicate shadows and too heavy lids, looked dreamily and a little timorously on the world. Tonio's walk was idle and uneven, whereas the other's slim legs in their black stockings moved with an elastic, rhythmic tread.

Tonio did not speak. He suffered. His rather oblique brows were drawn together in a frown, his lips were rounded to whistle, he gazed into space with his head on one side. Posture and manner were habitual.

Suddenly Hans shoved his arm into Tonio's, with a sideways look—he knew very well what the trouble was. And Tonio, though he was silent for the next few steps, felt his heart soften.

"I hadn't forgotten, you see, Tonio," Hans said, gazing at the pavement, "I only thought it wouldn't come off today because it was so wet and windy. But I don't mind that at all, and it's jolly of you to have waited. I thought you had gone home, and I was cross. . . ."

Everything in Tonio leaped and jumped for joy at the words.

"All right; let's go over the wall," he said with a quaver in his voice. "Over the Millwall and the Holstenwall, and I'll go as far as your house with you, Hans. Then I'll have to walk back alone,

but that doesn't matter; next time you can go round my way."

At bottom he was not really convinced by what Hans said; he quite knew the other attached less importance to this walk than he did himself. Yet he saw Hans was sorry for his remissness and willing to be put in a position to ask pardon, a pardon that Tonio was far indeed from withholding.

The truth was, Tonio loved Hans Hansen, and had already suffered much on his account. He who loves the more is the inferior and must suffer; in this hard and simple fact his fourteen-year-old soul had already been instructed by life; and he was so organized that he received such experiences consciously, wrote them down as it were inwardly, and even, in a certain way, took pleasure in them, though without ever letting them mould his conduct, indeed, or drawing any practical advantage from them. Being what he was, he found this knowledge far more important and far more interesting than the sort they made him learn in school; yes, during his lesson hours in the vaulted Gothic classrooms he was mainly occupied in feeling his way about among these intuitions of his and penetrating them. The process gave him the same kind of satisfaction as that he felt when he moved about in his room with his violin—for he played the violin—and made the tones, brought out as softly as ever he knew how, mingle with the splashing of the fountain that leaped and danced down there in the garden beneath the branches of the old walnut tree.

The fountain, the old walnut tree, his fiddle, and away in the distance the North Sea, within sound of whose summer murmurings he spent his holidays—these were the things he loved, within these he enfolded his spirit, among these things his inner life took its course. And they were all things whose names were effective in verse and occurred pretty frequently in the lines Tonio Kröger sometimes wrote.

The fact that he had a note-book full of such things, written by himself, leaked out through his own carelessness and injured him no little with the masters as well as among his fellows. On the one hand, Consul Kröger's son found their attitude both cheap and silly, and despised his schoolmates and his masters as well, and in his turn (with extraordinary penetration) saw through and disliked their personal weaknesses and bad breeding. But then, on the other hand, he himself felt his verse-making extravagant and out

of place and to a certain extent agreed with those who considered it an unpleasing occupation. But that did not enable him to leave off.

As he wasted his time at home, was slow and absent-minded at school, and always had bad marks from the masters, he was in the habit of bringing home pitifully poor reports, which troubled and angered his father, a tall, fastidiously dressed man, with thoughtful blue eyes, and always a wild flower in his buttonhole. But for his mother, she cared nothing about the reports—Tonio's beautiful black-haired mother, whose name was Consuelo, and who was so absolutely different from the other ladies in the town, because father had brought her long ago from some place far down on the map.

Tonio loved his dark, fiery mother, who played the piano and mandolin so wonderfully, and he was glad his doubtful standing among men did not distress her. Though at the same time he found his father's annoyance a more dignified and respectable attitude and despite his scoldings understood him very well, whereas his mother's blithe indifference always seemed just a little wanton. His thoughts at times would run something like this: "It is true enough that I am what I am and will not and cannot alter: heedless, self-willed, with my mind on things nobody else thinks of. And so it is right they should scold and punish me and not smother things all up with kisses and music. After all, we are not gypsies living in a green wagon; we're respectable people, the family of Consul Kröger." And not seldom he would think: "Why is it I am different, why do I fight everything, why am I at odds with the masters and like a stranger among the other boys? The good scholars, and the solid majority—they don't find the masters funny, they don't write verses, their thoughts are all about things that people do think about and can talk about out loud. How regular and comfortable they must feel, knowing that everybody knows just where they stand! It must be nice! But what is the matter with me, and what will be the end of it all?"

These thoughts about himself and his relation to life played an important part in Tonio's love for Hans Hansen. He loved him in the first place because he was handsome; but in the next because he was in every respect his own opposite and foil. Hans Hansen was a capital scholar, and a jolly chap to boot, who was head at drill,

rode and swam to perfection, and lived in the sunshine of popularity. The masters were almost tender with him, they called him Hans and were partial to him in every way; the other pupils curried favour with him; even grown people stopped him on the street, twitched the shock of hair beneath his Danish sailor cap, and said: "Ah, here you are, Hans Hansen, with your pretty blond hair! Still head of the school? Remember me to your father and mother, that's a fine lad!"

Such was Hans Hansen; and ever since Tonio Kröger had known him, from the very minute he set eyes on him, he had burned inwardly with a heavy, envious longing. "Who else has blue eyes like yours, or lives in such friendliness and harmony with all the world? You are always spending your time with some right and proper occupation. When you have done your prep you take your riding-lesson, or make things with a fret-saw; even in the holidays, at the seashore, you row and sail and swim all the time, while I wander off somewhere and lie down in the sand and stare at the strange and mysterious changes that whisk over the face of the sea. And all that is why your eyes are so clear. To be like you . . ."

He made no attempt to be like Hans Hansen, and perhaps hardly even seriously wanted to. What he did ardently, painfully want was that, just as he was, Hans Hansen should love him; and he wooed Hans Hansen in his own way, deeply, lingeringly, devotedly, with a melancholy that gnawed and burned more terribly than all the sudden passion one might have expected from his exotic looks.

And he wooed not in vain. Hans respected Tonio's superior power of putting certain difficult matters into words; moreover, he felt the lively presence of an uncommonly strong and tender feeling for himself; he was grateful for it, and his response gave Tonio much happiness—though also many pangs of jealousy and disillusion over his futile efforts to establish a communion of spirit between them. For the queer thing was that Tonio, who after all envied Hans Hansen for being what he was, still kept on trying to draw him over to his own side; though of course he could succeed in this at most only at moments and superficially. . . .

"I have just been reading something so wonderful and splendid . . ." he said. They were walking and eating together out of a bag

of fruit toffees they had bought at Iverson's sweet-shop in Mill Street for ten pfennigs. "You must read it, Hans, it is Schiller's *Don Carlos* . . . I'll lend it you if you like. . . ."

"Oh, no," said Hans Hansen, "you needn't, Tonio, that's not anything for me. I'll stick to my horse books. There are wonderful cuts in them, let me tell you. I'll show them to you when you come to see me. They are instantaneous photography—the horse in motion; you can see him trot and canter and jump, in all positions, that you never can get to see in life, because they happen so fast. . . ."

"In all positions?" asked Tonio politely. "Yes, that must be great. But about *Don Carlos*—it is beyond anything you could possibly dream of. There are places in it that are so lovely they make you jump . . . as though it were an explosion—"

"An explosion?" asked Hans Hansen. "What sort of an explosion?"

"For instance, the place where the king has been crying because the marquis betrayed him . . . but the marquis did it only out of love for the prince, you see, he sacrifices himself for his sake. And the word comes out of the cabinet into the antechamber that the king has been weeping. 'Weeping? The king been weeping?' All the courtiers are fearfully upset, it goes through and through you, for the king has always been so frightfully stiff and stern. But it is so easy to understand why he cried, and I feel sorrier for him than for the prince and the marquis put together. He is always so alone, nobody loves him, and then he thinks he has found one man, and then he betrays him. . . ."

Hans Hansen looked sideways into Tonio's face, and something in it must have won him to the subject, for suddenly he shoved his arm once more into Tonio's and said:

"How had he betrayed him, Tonio?"

Tonio went on.

"Well," he said, "you see all the letters for Brabant and Flanders—"

"There comes Irwin Immerthal," said Hans.

Tonio stopped talking. If only the earth would open and swallow Immerthal up! "Why does he have to come disturbing us? If he only doesn't go with us all the way and talk about the riding-lessons!" For Irwin Immerthal had riding-lessons too. He was the

son of the bank president and lived close by, outside the city wall. He had already been home and left his bag, and now he walked towards them through the avenue. His legs were crooked and his eyes like slits.

"lo, Immerthal," said Hans. "I'm taking a little walk with Kröger. . ."

"I have to go into town on an errand," said Immerthal. "But I'll walk a little way with you. Are those fruit toffees you've got? Thanks, I'll have a couple. Tomorrow we have our next lesson, Hans." He meant the riding-lesson.

"What larks!" said Hans. "I'm going to get the leather gaiters for a present, because I was top lately in our papers."

"You don't take riding-lessons, I suppose, Kröger?" asked Immerthal, and his eyes were only two gleaming cracks.

"No . . ." answered Tonio, uncertainly.

"You ought to ask your father," Hans Hansen remarked, "so you could have lessons too, Kröger."

"Yes . . ." said Tonio. He spoke hastily and without interest; his throat had suddenly contracted, because Hans had called him by his last name. Hans seemed conscious of it too, for he said by way of explanation: "I call you Kröger because your first name is so crazy. Don't mind my saying so, I can't do with it all. Tonio—why, what sort of name is that? Though of course I know it's not your fault in the least."

"No, they probably called you that because it sounds so foreign and sort of something special," said Immerthal, obviously with intent to say just the right thing.

Tonio's mouth twitched. He pulled himself together and said:

"Yes, it's a silly name— Lord knows I'd rather be called Heinrich or Wilhelm. It's all because I'm named after my mother's brother Antonio. She comes from down there, you know. . . ."

There he stopped and let the others have their say about horses and saddles. Hans had taken Immerthal's arm; he talked with a fluency that *Don Carlos* could never have aroused in him. . . . Tonio felt a mounting desire to weep pricking his nose from time to time; he had hard work to control the trembling of his lips.

Hans could not stand his name—what was to be done? He himself was called Hans, and Immerthal was called Irwin; two good, sound, familiar names, offensive to nobody. And Tonio was for-

eign and queer. Yes, there was always something queer about him, whether he would or no, and he was alone, the regular and usual would none of him; although after all he was no gypsy in a green wagon, but the son of Consul Kroger, a member of the Kroger family. But why did Hans call him Tonio as long as they were alone and then feel ashamed as soon as anybody else was by? Just now he had won him over, they had been close together, he was sure. "How had he betrayed him, Tonio?" Hans asked, and took his arm. But he had breathed easier directly Immerthal came up, he had dropped him like a shot, even gratuitously taunted him with his outlandish name. How it hurt to have to see through all this! . . . Hans Hansen did like him a little, when they were alone, that he knew. But let a third person come, he was ashamed, and offered up his friend. And again he was alone. He thought of King Philip. The king had wept. . . .

"Goodness I have to go," said Irwin Immerthal. "Good bye, and thanks for the toffee." He jumped upon a bench that stood by the way, ran along it with his crooked legs, jumped down, and trotted off.

"I like Immerthal," said Hans, with emphasis. He had a spoilt and arbitrary way of announcing his likes and dislikes, as though graciously pleased to confer them like an order on this person and that. . . . He went on talking about the riding-lessons where he had left off. Anyhow, it was not very much farther to his house, the walk over the walls was not a long one. They held their caps and bent their heads before the strong, damp wind that rattled and groaned in the leafless trees. And Hans Hansen went on talking, Tonio throwing in a forced yes or no from time to time. Hans talked eagerly, had taken his arm again, but the contact gave Tonio no pleasure. The nearness was only apparent, not real, it meant nothing. . . .

They struck away from the walls close to the station, where they saw a train puff busily past, idly counted the coaches, and waved to the man who was perched on top of the last one bundled in a leather coat. They stopped in front of the Hansen villa on the Lindenplatz, and Hans went into detail about what fun it was to stand on the bottom rail of the garden gate and let it swing on its creaking hinges. After that they said good-bye.

"I must go in now," said Hans. "Good-bye, Tonio. Next time I'll

take you home, see if I don't."

"Good-bye, Hans," said Tonio. "It was a nice walk."

They put out their hands, all wet and rusty from the garden gate. But as Hans looked into Tonio's eyes, he bethought himself, a look of remorse came over his charming face.

"And I'll read *Don Carlos* pretty soon, too," he said quickly. "That bit about the king in his cabinet must be nuts." Then he took his bag under his arm and ran off through the front garden. Before he disappeared he turned and nodded once more.

And Tonio went off as though on wings. The wind was at his back; but it was not the wind alone that bore him along so lightly.

Hans would read *Don Carlos*, and then they would have something to talk about, and neither Irwin Immerthal nor another could join in. How well they understood each other! Perhaps—who knew?—some day he might even get Hans to write poetry! . . . No, no, that he did not ask. Hans must not become like Tonio, he must stop just as he was, so strong and bright, everybody loved him as he was, and Tonio most of all. But it would do him no harm to read *Don Carlos*. . . . Tonio passed under the squat old city gate, along by the harbour, and up the steep, wet, windy, gabled street to his parents' house. His heart beat richly: longing was awake in it, and a gentle envy; a faint contempt, and no little innocent bliss.

Ingeborg Holm, blonde little Inge, the daughter of Dr. Holm, who lived on Market Square opposite the tall old Gothic fountain with its manifold spires—she it was Tonio Kröger loved when he was sixteen years old.

Strange how things come about! He had seen her a thousand times; then one evening he saw her again; saw her in a certain light, talking with a friend in a certain saucy way, laughing and tossing her head; saw her lift her arm and smooth her back hair with her schoolgirl hand, that was by no means particularly fine or slender, in such a way that the thin sleeve slipped down from her elbow; heard her speak a word or two, a quite indifferent phrase, but with a certain intonation, with a warm ring in her voice; and his heart throbbed with ecstasy, far stronger than that he had once felt when he looked at Hans Hansen long ago, when he was still a little, stupid boy.

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That evening he carried away her picture in his eye: the thick blond plait, the longish, laughing blue eyes, the saddle of pale freckles across the nose. He could not go to sleep for hearing that ring in her voice; he tried in a whisper to imitate the tone in which she had uttered the commonplace phrase, and felt a shiver run through and through him. He knew by experience that this was love. And he was accurately aware that love would surely bring him much pain, affliction, and sadness, that it would certainly destroy his peace, filling his heart to overflowing with melodies which would be no good to him because he would never have the time or tranquillity to give them permanent form. Yet he received this love with joy, surrendered himself to it, and cherished it with all the strength of his being; for he knew that love made one vital and rich, and he longed to be vital and rich, far more than he did to work tranquilly on anything to give it permanent form.

Tonio Kröger fell in love with merry Ingeborg Holm in Frau Consul Hustedé's drawing-room on the evening when it was emptied of furniture for the weekly dancing-class. It was a private class, attended only by members of the first families; it met by turns in the various parental houses to receive instruction from Knaak, the dancing-master, who came from Hamburg expressly for the purpose.

François Knaak was his name, and what a man he was! "*J'ai l'honneur de me vous représenter,*" he would say, "*mon nom est Knaak.* . . . This is not said during the bowing, but after you have finished and are standing up straight again. In a low voice, but distinctly. Of course one does not need to introduce oneself in French every day in the week, but if you can do it correctly and faultlessly in French you are not likely to make a mistake when you do it in German." How marvellously the silky black frock-coat fitted his chubby hips! His trouser legs fell down in soft folds upon his patent-leather pumps with their wide satin bows, and his brown eyes glanced about him with languid pleasure in their own beauty.

All this excess of self-confidence and good form was positively overpowering. He went trippingly—and nobody tripped like him, so elastically, so weavingly, rockingly, royally—up to the mistress of the house, made a bow, waited for a hand to be put forth. This vouchsafed, he gave murmurous voice to his gratitude, stepped

buoyantly back, turned on his left foot, swiftly drawing the right one backwards on its toe-tip, and moved away, with his hips shaking.

When you took leave of a company you must go backwards out at the door; when you fetched a chair, you were not to shove it along the floor or clutch it by one leg; but gently, by the back, and set it down without a sound. When you stood, you were not to fold your hands on your tummy or seek with your tongue the corners of your mouth. If you did, Herr Knaak had a way of showing you how it looked that filled you with disgust for that particular gesture all the rest of your life.

This was deportment. As for dancing, Herr Knaak was, if possible, even more of a master at that. The salon was emptied of furniture and lighted by a gas-chandelier in the middle of the ceiling and candles on the mantel-shelf. The floor was strewn with talc, and the pupils stood about in a dumb semicircle. But in the next room, behind the portières, mothers and aunts sat on plush-upholstered chairs and watched Herr Knaak through their lorgnettes, as in little springs and hops, curtsying slightly, the hem of his frock-coat held up on each side by two fingers, he demonstrated the single steps of the mazurka. When he wanted to dazzle his audience completely he would suddenly and unexpectedly spring from the ground, whirling his two legs about each other with bewildering swiftness in the air, as it were trilling with them, and then, with a subdued bump, which nevertheless shook everything within him to its depths, returned to earth.

"What an unmentionable monkey!" thought Tonio Kröger to himself. But he saw the absorbed smile on jolly little Inge's face as she followed Herr Knaak's movements; and that, though not that alone, roused in him something like admiration of all this wonderfully controlled corporeality. How tranquil, how imperceptible was Herr Knaak's gaze! His eyes did not plumb the depth of things to the place where life becomes complex and melancholy; they knew nothing save that they were beautiful brown eyes. But that was just why his bearing was so proud. To be able to walk like that, one must be stupid; then one was loved, then one was lovable. He could so well understand how it was that Inge, blonde, sweet little Inge, looked at Herr Knaak as she did. But would never a girl look at him like that?

Oh, yes, there would, and did. For instance, Magdalena Vermehren, Attorney Vermehren's daughter, with the gentle mouth and the great, dark, brilliant eyes, so serious and adoring. She often fell down in the dance; but when it was "ladies' choice" she came up to him; she knew he wrote verses and twice she had asked him to show them to her. She often sat at a distance, with drooping head, and gazed at him. He did not care. It was Inge he loved, blonde, jolly Inge, who most assuredly despised him for his poetic effusions . . . he looked at her, looked at her narrow blue eyes full of fun and mockery, and felt an envious longing; to be shut away from her like this, to be for ever strange—he felt it in his breast, like a heavy, burning weight.

"First couple *en avant*," said Herr Knaak; and no words can tell how marvellously he pronounced the nasal. They were to practise the quadrille, and to Tonio Kröger's profound alarm he found himself in the same set with Inge Holm. He avoided her where he could, yet somehow was for ever near her; kept his eyes away from her person and yet found his gaze ever on her. There she came, tripping up hand-in-hand with red-headed Ferdinand Matthiessen; she flung back her braid, drew a deep breath, and took her place opposite Tonio. Herr Heinzelmänn, at the piano, laid bony hands upon the keys, Herr Knaak waved his arm, the quadrille began.

She moved to and fro before his eyes, forwards and back, pacing and swinging; he seemed to catch a fragrance from her hair or the folds of her thin white frock, and his eyes grew sadder and sadder. "I love you, dear, sweet Inge," he said to himself, and put into his words all the pain he felt to see her so intent upon the dance with not a thought of him. Some lines of an exquisite poem by Storm came into his mind: "I would sleep, but thou must dance." It seemed against all sense, and most depressing, that he must be dancing when he was in love. . . .

"First couple *en avant*," said Herr Knaak; it was the next figure. "Compliment! Moulinet des dames! Tour de main!" and he swallowed the silent *e* in the "DE", with quite indescribable ease and grace.

"Second couple *en avant*!" This was Tonio Kröger and his partner. "Compliment!" And Tonio Kröger bowed. "Moulinet des dames!" And Tonio Kröger, with bent head and gloomy brows,

laid his hand on those of the four ladies, on Ingeborg Holm's hand, and danced the *moulinet*.

Roundabout rose a tittering and laughing. Herr Knaak took a ballet pose conventionally expressive of horror. "Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" he cried. "Stop! Stop! Kröger among the ladies! *En arrière*, Fräulein Kröger, step back, *si donce!* Everybody else understood it but you. Shoo! Get out! Get away!" He drew out his yellow silk handkerchief and flapped Tonio Kröger back to his place.

Everyone laughed, the girls and the boys and the ladies beyond the portières; Herr Knaak had made something too utterly funny out of the little episode, it was as amusing as a play. But Herr Heinzelmännchen at the piano sat and waited, with a dry, business-like air, for a sign to go on; he was hardened against Herr Knaak's effects.

Then the quadrille went on. And the intermission followed. The parlourmaid came clinking in with a tray of wine-jelly glasses, the cook followed in her wake with a load of plum-cake. But Tonio Kröger stole away. He stole out into the corridor and stood there, his hands behind his back, in front of a window with the blind down. He never thought that one could not see through the blind and that it was absurd to stand there as though one were looking out.

For he was looking within, into himself, the theatre of so much pain and longing. Why, why was he here? Why was he not sitting by the window in his own room, reading Storm's *Immensee* and lifting his eyes to the twilight garden outside, where the old walnut tree moaned? That was the place for him! Others might dance, others bend their fresh and lively minds upon the pleasure in hand! . . . But no, no, after all, his place was here, where he could feel near Inge, even although he stood lonely and aloof, seeking to distinguish the warm notes of her voice amid the buzzing, clattering, and laughter within. Oh, lovely Inge, blonde Inge of the narrow, laughing blue eyes! So lovely and laughing as you are one can only be if one does not read *Immensee* and never tries to write things like it. And that was just the tragedy!

Ah, she must come! She must notice where he had gone, must feel how he suffered! She must slip out to him, even pity must bring her, to lay her hand on his shoulder and say: "Do come

back to us, ah, don't be sad—I love you, Tonio." He listened behind him and waited in frantic suspense. But not in the least. Such things did not happen on this earth.

Had she laughed at him too like all the others? Yes, she had, however gladly he would have denied it for both their sakes. And yet it was only because he had been so taken up with her that he had danced the *moulinet des dames*. Suppose he had—what did that matter? Had not a magazine accepted a poem of his a little while ago—even though the magazine had failed before his poem could be printed? The day was coming when he would be famous, when they would print everything he wrote; and then he would see if that made any impression on Inge Holm! No, it would make no impression at all; that was just it. Magdalena Vermehren, who was always falling down in the dances, yes, she would be impressed. But never Ingeborg Holm, never blue-eyed, laughing Inge. So what was the good of it?

Tonio Kröger's heart contracted painfully at the thought. To feel stirring within you the wonderful and melancholy play of strange forces and to be aware that those others you yearn for are blithely inaccessible to all that moves you—what a pain is this! And yet! He stood there aloof and alone, staring hopelessly at a drawn blind and making, in his distraction, as though he could look out. But yet he was happy. For he lived. His heart was full; hotly and sadly it beat for thee, Ingeborg Holm, and his soul embraced thy blonde, simple, pert, commonplace little personality in blissful self-abnegation.

Often after that he stood thus, with burning cheeks, in lonely corners, whither the sound of the music, the tinkling of glasses and fragrance of flowers came but faintly, and tried to distinguish the ringing tones of thy voice amid the distant happy din; stood suffering for thee—and still was happy! Often it angered him to think that he might talk with Magdalena Vermehren, who always fell down in the dance. She understood him, she laughed or was serious in the right places; while Inge the fair, let him sit never so near her, seemed remote and estranged, his speech not being her speech. And still—he was happy. For happiness, he told himself, is not in being loved—which is a satisfaction of the vanity and mingled with disgust. Happiness is in loving, and perhaps in snatching fugitive little approaches to the beloved object. And he

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took inward note of this thought, wrote it down in his mind; followed out all its implications and felt it to the depths of his soul.

"Faithfulness," thought Tonio Kröger. "Yes, I will be faithful, I will love thee, Ingeborg, as long as I live!" He said this in the honesty of his intentions. And yet a still small voice whispered misgivings in his ear: after all, he had forgotten Hans Hansen utterly, even though he saw him every day! And the hateful, the pitiable fact was that this still, small, rather spiteful voice was right: time passed and the day came when Tonio Kröger was no longer so unconditionally ready as once he had been to die for the lively Inge, because he felt in himself desires and powers to accomplish in his own way a host of wonderful things in this world.

And he circled with watchful eye the sacrificial altar, where flickered the pure, chaste flame of his love; knelt before it and tended and cherished it in every way, because he so wanted to be faithful. And in a little while, unobservably, without sensation or stir, it went out after all.

But Tonio Kröger still stood before the cold altar, full of regret and dismay at the fact that faithfulness was impossible upon this earth. Then he shrugged his shoulders and went his way.

He went the way that go he must, a little idly, a little irregularly, whistling to himself, gazing into space with his head on one side; and if he went wrong it was because for some people there is no such thing as a right way. Asked what in the world he meant to become, he gave various answers, for he was used to say (and had even already written it) that he bore within himself the possibility of a thousand ways of life, together with the private conviction that they were all sheer impossibilities.

Even before he left the narrow streets of his native city, the threads that bound him to it had gently loosened. The old Kröger family gradually declined, and some people quite rightly considered Tonio Kröger's own existence and way of life as one of the signs of decay. His father's mother, the head of the family, had died, and not long after his own father followed, the tall, thoughtful, carefully dressed gentleman with the field-flower in his buttonhole. The great Kröger house, with all its stately tradition, came up for sale, and the firm was dissolved. Tonio's mother, his

beautiful, fiery mother, who played the piano and mandolin so wonderfully and to whom nothing mattered at all, she married again after a year's time, married a musician, moreover, a virtuoso with an Italian name, and went away with him into remote blue distances. Tonio Kroger found this a little irregular, but who was he to call her to order, who wrote poetry himself and could not even give an answer when asked what he meant to do in life?

And so he left his native town and its tortuous, gabled streets with the damp wind whistling through them, left the fountain in the garden and the ancient walnut tree, familiar friends of his youth, left the sea too, that he loved so much, and felt no pain to go. For he was grown up and sensible and had come to realize how things stood with him—he looked down on the lowly and vulgar life he had led so long in these surroundings.

He surrendered utterly to the power that to him seemed the highest on earth, to whose service he felt called, which promised him elevation and honours—the power of intellect, the power of the Word, that lords it with a smile over the unconscious and inarticulate. To this power he surrendered with all the passion of youth, and it rewarded him with all it had to give, taking from him inexorably, in return, all that it is wont to take.

It sharpened his eyes and made him see through the huge words which puff out the bosoms of mankind, it opened for him men's souls and his own—made him clairvoyant, showed him the inwardness of the world and the ultimate behind men's words and deeds. And all that he saw could be put in two words—the comedy and the tragedy of life.

And then, with knowledge—its torment and its arrogance, came solitude, because he could not endure the blithe and innocent with their darkened understanding, while they in turn were troubled by the sign on his brow. But his love of the word kept growing sweeter and sweeter, and his love of form, for he used to say (and had already said it in writing) that knowledge of the soul would unfailingly make us melancholy if the pleasure of expression did not keep us alert and of good cheer.

He lived in large cities and in the south, promising himself a luxuriant ripening of his art by southern suns, perhaps it was the blood of his mother's race that drew him thither. But, his heart being dead and loveless, he fell into adventures of the flesh, des-

cended into the depths of lust and searing sin, and suffered unspeakably thereby. It might have been his father in him, that tall, thoughtful, fastidiously dressed man with the wild flower in his buttonhole, that made him suffer so down there in the south; now and again he would feel a faint, yearning memory of a certain joy that was of the soul; once it had been his own, but now, in all his joys, he could not find it again.

Then he would be seized with disgust and hatred of the senses; pant after purity and seemly peace, while still he breathed the air of art, the tepid, sweet air of permanent spring, heavy with fragrance where it breeds and brews and burgeons in the mysterious bliss of creation. So for all result he was flung to and fro for ever between two crass extremes: between icy intellect and scorching sense, and what with his pangs of conscience led an exhausting life, rare, extraordinary, excessive, which at bottom he, Tonio Kroger, despised. "What a labyrinth!" he sometimes thought. "How could I possibly have got into all these fantastic adventures? As though I had a wagonful of travelling gypsies for my ancestors!"

But as his health suffered from these excesses, so his artistry was sharpened; it grew fastidious, precious, *raffiné*, morbidly sensitive in questions of tact and taste, rasped by the banal. His first appearance in print elicited much pleasure; there was joy among the elect, for it was a good and workmanlike performance, full of humour and acquaintance with pain. In no long time his name—the same by which his masters had reproached him, the same he had signed to his earliest verses on the walnut tree and the fountain and the sea, those syllables compact of the north and the south, that good middle-class name with the exotic twist to it—became a synonym for excellence; for the painful thoroughness of the experiences he had gone through, combined with a tenacious ambition and a persistent industry, joined battle with the irritable fastidiousness of his taste and under grinding torments issued in work of a quality quite uncommon.

He worked, not like a man who works that he may live; but as one who is bent on doing nothing but work; having no regard for himself as a human being but only as a creator; moving about grey and unobtrusive among his fellows like an actor without his make-up, who counts for nothing as soon as he stops representing something else. He worked withdrawn out of sight and sound of

the small fry, for whom he felt nothing but contempt, because to them a talent was a social asset like another; who, whether they were poor or not, went about ostentatiously shabby or else flaunted startling cravats, all the time taking jolly good care to amuse themselves, to be artistic and charming without the smallest notion of the fact that good work only comes out under pressure of a bad life; that he who lives does not work, that one must die to life in order to be utterly a creator.

"Shall I disturb you?" asked Tonio Kröger on the threshold of the atelier. He held his hat in his hand and bowed with some ceremony, although Lisabeta Ivanovna was a good friend of his, to whom he told all his troubles.

"Mercy on you, Tonio Kröger! Don't be so formal," answered she, with her lilting intonation. "Everybody knows you were taught good manners in your nursery." She transferred her brush to her left hand, that held the palette, reached him her right, and looked him in the face, smiling and shaking her head.

"Yes, but you are working," he said. "Let's see. Oh, you've been getting on," and he looked at the colour-sketches leaning against chairs at both sides of the easel and from them to the large canvas covered with a square linen mesh, where the first patches of colour were beginning to appear among the confused and schematic lines of the charcoal sketch.

This was in Munich, in a back building in Schellingstrasse, several storeys up. Beyond the wide window facing the north were blue sky, sunshine, birds twittering; the young sweet breath of spring streaming through an open pane mingled with the smells of paint and fixative. The afternoon light, bright golden, flooded the spacious emptiness of the atelier; it made no secret of the bad flooring or the rough table under the window, covered with little bottles, tubes, and brushes; it illumined the unframed studies on the unpapered walls, the torn silk screen that shut off a charmingly furnished little living-corner near the door; it shone upon the inchoate work on the easel, upon the artist and the poet there before it.

She was about the same age as himself—slightly past thirty. She sat there on a low stool, in her dark-blue apron, and leant her chin in her hand. Her brown hair, compactly dressed, already a

little grey at the sides, was parted in the middle and waved over the temples, framing a sensitive, sympathetic, dark-skinned face, which was Slavic in its facial structure, with flat nose, strongly accentuated cheek-bones, and little bright black eyes. She sat there measuring her work with her head on one side and her eyes screwed up; her features were drawn with a look of misgiving, almost of vexation.

He stood beside her, his right hand on his hip, with the other furiously twirling his brown moustache. His dress, reserved in cut and a soothing shade of grey, was punctilious and dignified to the last degree. He was whistling softly to himself, in the way he had, and his slanting brows were gathered in a frown. The dark-brown hair was parted with severe correctness, but the laboured forehead beneath showed a nervous twitching, and the chiselled southern features were sharpened as though they had been gone over again with a graver's tool. And yet the mouth—how gently curved it was, the chin how softly formed! . . . After a little he drew his hand across his brow and eyes and turned away.

"I ought not to have come," he said.

"And why not, Tonio Kroger?"

"I've just got up from my desk, Lisabeta, and inside my head it looks just the way it does on this canvas. A scaffolding, a faint first draft smeared with corrections and a few splotches of colour; yes, and I come up here and see the same thing. And the same conflict and contradiction in the air," he went on, sniffing, "that has been torturing me at home. It's extraordinary. If you are possessed by an idea, you find it expressed everywhere, you even *smell* it. Fixative and the breath of spring; art and—what? Don't say nature, Lisabeta, 'nature' isn't exhausting. Ah, no, I ought to have gone for a walk, though it's doubtful if it would have made me feel better. Five minutes ago, not far from here I met a man I know, Adalbert, the novelist. 'God damn the spring!' says he in the aggressive way he has. 'It is and always has been the most ghastly time of the year. Can you get hold of a single sensible idea, Kröger? Can you sit still and work out even the smallest effect, when your blood tickles till it's positively indecent and you are teased by a whole host of irrelevant sensations that when you look at them turn out to be unworkable trash? For my part, I am going to a café. A café is neutral territory, the change of the seasons

doesn't affect it, it represents, so to speak, the detached and elevated sphere of the literary man, in which one is only capable of refined ideas.' And he went into the café . . . and perhaps I ought to have gone with him."

Lisabeta was highly entertained.

"I like that, Tonio Kroger. That part about the indecent tickling is good. And he is right too, in a way, for spring is really not very conducive to work. But now listen. Spring or no spring, I will just finish this little place—work out this little effect, as your friend Adalbert would say. Then we'll go into the 'salon' and have tea, and you can talk yourself out, for I can perfectly well see you are too full for utterance. Will you just compose yourself somewhere—on that chest, for instance, if you are not afraid for your aristocratic garments—"

"Oh, leave my clothes alone, Lisabeta Ivanovna! Do you want me to go about in a ragged velveteen jacket or a red waistcoat? Every artist is as bohemian as the deuce, inside! Let him at least wear proper clothes and behave outwardly like a respectable being. No, I am not too full for utterance," he said as he watched her mixing her paints. "I've told you, it is only that I have a problem and a conflict, that sticks in my mind and disturbs me at my work. . . . Yes, what was it we were just saying? We were talking about Adalbert, the novelist, that stout and forthright man. 'Spring is the most ghastly time of the year,' says he, and goes into a café. A man has to know what he needs, eh? Well, you see he's not the only one, the spring makes me nervous, too, I get dazed with the triflingness and sacredness of the memories and feelings it evokes; only that I don't succeed in looking down on it, for the truth is it makes me ashamed, I quail before its sheer naturalness and triumphant youth. And I don't know whether I should envy Adalbert or despise him for his ignorance. . . .

"Yes, it is true, spring is a bad time for work, and why? Because we are feeling too much. Nobody but a beginner imagines that he who creates must feel. Every real and genuine artist smiles at such naive blunders as that. A melancholy enough smile, perhaps, but still a smile. For what an artist talks about is never the main point; it is the raw material, in and for itself indifferent, out of which, with bland and serene mastery, he creates the work of art. If you care too much about what you have to say, if your heart is

too much in it, you can be pretty sure of making a mess. You get pathetic, you wax sentimental; something dull and doddering, without roots or outlines, with no sense of humour—something tiresome and banal grows under your hand, and you get nothing out of it but apathy in your audience and disappointment and misery in yourself. For so it is, Lisabeta; feeling, warm, heartfelt feeling, is always banal and futile; only the irritations and icy ecstasies of the artist's corrupted nervous system are artistic. The artist must be unhuman, extra-human; he must stand in a queer aloof relationship to our humanity; only so is he in a position, I ought to say only so would he be tempted, to represent it, to present it, to portray it to good effect. The very gift of style, of form and expression, is nothing else than this cool and fastidious attitude towards humanity; you might say there has to be this impoverishment and devastation as a preliminary condition. For sound natural feeling, say what you like, has no taste. It is all up with the artist as soon as he becomes a man and begins to feel. Adalbert knows that; that's why he betook himself to the café, the neutral territory—God help him!"

"Yes, God help him, Batuschka," said Lisabeta, as she washed her hands in a tin basin. "You don't need to follow his example."

"No, Lisabeta, I am not going to; and the only reason is that I am now and again in a position to feel a little ashamed of the springtime of my art. You see sometimes I get letters from strangers, full of praise and thanks and admiration from people whose feelings I have touched. I read them and feel touched myself at these warm if ungainly emotions I have called up; a sort of pity steals over me at this naïve enthusiasm; and I positively blush at the thought of how these good people would freeze up if they were to get a look behind the scenes. What they, in their innocence, cannot comprehend is that a properly constituted, healthy, decent man never writes, acts, or composes—all of which does not hinder me from using his admiration for my genius to goad myself on; nor from taking it in deadly earnest and aping the airs of a great man. Oh, don't talk to me, Lisabeta. I tell you I am sick to death of depicting humanity without having any part or lot in it. . . . Is an artist a male, anyhow? Ask the females! It seems to me we artists are all of us something like those unsexed papal singers . . . we sing like angels; but—"

"Shame on you, Tomio Kroger. But come to tea. The water is just on the boil, and here are some *papyros*. You were talking about singing soprano, do go on. But really you ought to be ashamed of yourself. If I did not know your passionate devotion to your calling and how proud you are of it—"

"Don't talk about 'calling', Lisabeta Ivanovna. Literature is not a calling, it is a curse, believe me! When does one begin to feel the curse? Early, horribly early. At a time when one ought by rights still to be living in peace and harmony with God and the world. It begins by your feeling yourself set apart, in a curious sort of opposition to the nice, regular people, there is a gulf of ironic sensibility, of knowledge, scepticism, disagreement, between you and the others, it grows deeper and deeper, you realize that you are alone, and from then on any *rapprochement* is simply hopeless! What a fate! That is, if you still have enough heart enough warmth of affections, to feel how frightful it is! . . . Your self consciousness is kindled, because you among thousands feel the sign on your brow and know that everyone else sees it. I once knew an actor, a man of genius, who had to struggle with a morbid self consciousness and instability. When he had no rôle to play, nothing to represent, this man consummate artist but impoverished human being, was overcome by an exaggerated consciousness of his ego. A genuine artist—not one who has taken up art as a profession like another, but artist foreordained and damned—you can pick out, without boasting very sharp perceptions, out of a group of men. The sense of being set apart and not belonging, of being known and observed, something both regal and incongruous shows in his face. You might see something of the same sort on the features of a prince walking through a crowd in ordinary clothes. But no civilian clothes are any good here, Lisabeta. You can disguise yourself, you can dress up like an attaché or a lieutenant of the guard on leave, you hardly need to give a glance or speak a word before everyone knows you are not a human being, but something else—something queer, different, inimical.

"But what is it, to be an artist? Nothing shows up the general human dislike of thinking, and man's innate craving to be comfortable, better than his attitude to this question. When these worthy people are affected by a work of art, they say humbly that that sort of thing is a 'gift'. And because in their innocence they

assume that beautiful and uplifting results must have beautiful and uplifting causes, they never dream that the 'gift' in question is a very dubious affair and rests upon extremely sinister foundations. Everybody knows that artists are 'sensitive' and easily wounded; just as everybody knows that ordinary people, with a normal bump of self-confidence, are not. Now you see, Lisabeta, I cherish at the bottom of my soul all the scorn and suspicion of the artist gentry—translated into terms of the intellectual—that my upright old forebears there on the Baltic would have felt for any juggler or mountebank that entered their houses. Listen to this. I know a banker, grey-haired business man, who has a gift for writing stories. He employs this gift in his idle hours, and some of his stories are of the first rank. But despite—I say despite—this excellent gift his withers are by no means unwrung: on the contrary, he has had to serve a prison sentence, on anything but trifling grounds. Yes, it was actually first in prison that he became conscious of his gift, and his experiences as a convict are the main theme in all his works. One might be rash enough to conclude that a man has to be at home in some kind of jail in order to become a poet. But can you escape the suspicion that the source and essence of his being an artist had less to do with his life in prison than they had with the reasons that brought him there? A banker who writes—that is a rarity, isn't it? But a banker who isn't a criminal, who is irreproachably respectable, and yet writes—he doesn't exist. Yes, you are laughing, and yet I am more than half serious. No problem, none in the world, is more tormenting than this of the artist and his human aspect. Take the most miraculous case of all, take the most typical and therefore the most powerful of artists, take such a morbid and profoundly equivocal work as *Tristan and Isolde*, and look at the effect it has on a healthy young man of thoroughly normal feelings. Exaltation, encouragement, warm, downright enthusiasm, perhaps incitement to 'artistic' creation of his own. Poor young dilettante! In us artists it looks fundamentally different from what he wots of, with his 'warm heart' and 'honest enthusiasm'. I've seen women and youths go mad over artists . . . and I *knew* about them . . . ! The origin, the accompanying phenomena, and the conditions of the artist life—good Lord, what I haven't observed about them, over and over !"

"Observed, Tonio Kröger? If I may ask, only 'observed'?"

He was silent, knitting his oblique brown brows and whistling softly to himself.

"Let me have your cup, Tonio. The tea is weak. And take another cigarette. Now, you perfectly know that you are looking at things as they do not necessarily have to be looked at. . . ."

"That is Horatio's answer, dear Lisabeta. 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.'"

"I mean, Tonio Kroger, that one can consider them just exactly as well from another side. I am only a silly painting female, and if I can contradict you at all, if I can defend your own profession a little against you, it is not by saying anything new, but simply by reminding you of some things you very well know yourself. of the purifying and healing influence of letters, the subduing of the passions by knowledge and eloquence, literature as the guide to understanding, forgiveness, and love, the redeeming power of the word, literary art as the noblest manifestation of the human mind, the poet as the most highly developed of human beings, the poet as saint. Is it to consider things not curiously enough, to consider them so?"

"You may talk like that, Lisabeta Ivanovna, you have a perfect right. And with reference to Russian literature, and the works of your poets, one can really worship them; they really come close to being that elevated literature you are talking about. But I am not ignoring your objections: they are part of the things I have in my mind today. . . . Look at me, Lisabeta. I don't look any too cheerful, do I? A little old and tired and pinched, eh? Well, now to come back to the 'knowledge.' Can't you imagine a man, born orthodox, mild-mannered, well meaning, a bit sentimental, just simply over stimulated by his psychological clairvoyance, and going to the dogs? Not to let the sadness of the world unman you, to read, mark, learn, and put to account even the most torturing things and to be of perpetual good cheer, in the sublime consciousness of moral superiority over the horrible invention of existence - yes, thank you! But despite all the joys of expression once in a while the thing gets on your nerves. '*Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner.*' I don't know about that. There is something I call being sick of knowledge, Lisabeta: when it is enough for you to see through a thing in order to be sick to death of it, and not in the least in a forgiving mood. Such was the case of Hamlet the

Dane, that typical literary man. He knew what it meant to be called to knowledge without being born to it. To see things clear, if even through your tears, to recognize, notice, observe—and have to put it all down with a smile, at the very moment when hands are clashing, and lips meeting, and the human gaze is blinded with feeling—it is infamous, Lisabeta, it is indecent, outrageous—but what good does it do to be outraged?

“Then another and no less charming side of the thing, of course, is your ennui, your indifferent and ironic attitude towards truth. It is a fact that there is no society in the world so dumb and hopeless as a circle of literary people who are hounded to death as it is. All knowledge is old and tedious to them. Utter some truth that it gave you considerable youthful joy to conquer and possess—and they will all chortle at you for your naïveté. Oh, yes, Lisabeta, literature is a wearing job. In human society, I do assure you, a reserved and sceptical man can be taken for stupid, whereas he is really only arrogant and perhaps lacks courage. So much for ‘knowledge’. Now for the ‘Word’. It isn’t so much a matter of the ‘redeeming power’ as it is of putting your emotions on ice and serving them up chilled! Honestly, don’t you think there’s a good deal of cool cheek in the prompt and superficial way a writer can get rid of his feelings by turning them into literature? If your heart is too full, if you are overpowered with the emotions of some sweet or exalted moment—nothing simpler! Go to the literary man, he will put it all straight for you *instantly*. He will analyse and formulate your affair, label it and express it and discuss it and polish it off and make you indifferent to it for time and eternity—and not charge you a farthing. You will go home quite relieved, cooled off, enlightened, and wonder what it was all about and why you were so mightily moved. And will you seriously enter the lists in behalf of this vain and frigid charlatan? What is uttered, so runs this *credo*, is finished and done with. If the whole world could be expressed, it would be saved, finished and done. . . . Well and good. But I am not a nihilist—”

“You are not a—” said Lisabeta. . . . She was lifting a teaspoonful of tea to her mouth and paused in the act to stare at him.

“Come, come, Lisabeta, what’s the matter? I say I am not a nihilist, with respect, that is, to lively feeling. You see, the literary man does not understand that life may go on living, unashamed,

even after it has been expressed and therewith finished. No matter how much it has been redeemed by becoming literature, it keeps right on sinning—for all action is sin in the mind's eye—

"I'm nearly done, Lisabeta. Please listen. I love life—this is an admission. I present it to you, you may have it. I have never in de it to anyone else. People say—people have even written and printed—that I hate life, or fear or despise or abominate it. I liked to hear this, it has always flattered me; but that does not make it true. I love life. You smile, and I know why, Lisabeta. But I implore you not to take what I am saying for literature. Don't think of Caesar Borgia or any drunken philosophy that has him for a standard bearer. He is nothing to me, your Caesar Borgia. I have no opinion of him, and I shall never comprehend how one can honour the extraordinary and daemonic as an ideal. No, life as the eternal antinomy of mind and art does not represent itself to us as a vision of savage greatness and ruthless beauty, we who are set apart and different do not conceive it as like us, unusual, it is the normal, respectable, and admirable that is the kingdom of our longing life, in all its seductive banality! That man is very far from being an artist, my dear, whose last and deepest enthusiasm is the *raffiné*, the eccentric and satanic, who does not know a longing for the innocent, the simple, and the living, for a little friendship, devotion, familiar human happiness—the gnawing, surreptitious hankering, Lisabeta for the bliss of the commonplace. . . .

"A genuine human friend. Believe me, I should be proud and happy to possess a friend among men. But up to now all the friends I have had have been daemons, kobolds, impious monsters, and spectres dumb with excess of knowledge—that is to say, literary men.

"I may be standing upon some platform, in some hall in front of people who have come to listen to me. And I find myself looking round among my hearers, I catch myself secretly peering about the auditorium, and all the while I am thinking who it is that has come here to listen to me, whose grateful applause is in my ears, with whom my art is making me one. . . . I do not find what I seek, Lisabeta, I find the herd. The same old community, the same old gathering of early Christians, so to speak: people with fine souls in uncouth bodies, people who are always falling down in the dance, if you know what I mean; the kind to whom poetry

serves as a sort of mild revenge on life. Always and only the poor and suffering, never any of the others, the blue-eyed ones, Lisabeta—they do not need mind. . . .

"And, after all, would it not be a lamentable lack of logic to want it otherwise? It is against all sense to love life and yet bend all the powers you have to draw it over to your own side, to the side of finesse and melancholy and the whole sickly aristocracy of letters. The kingdom of art increases and that of health and innocence declines on this earth. What there is left of it ought to be carefully preserved, one ought not to tempt people to read poetry who would much rather read books about the instantaneous photography of horses.

"For, after all, what more pitiable sight is there than life led astray by art? We artists have a consummate contempt for the dilettante, the man who is leading a living life and yet thinks he can be an artist too if he gets the chance. I am speaking from personal experience, I do assure you. Suppose I am in a company in a good house, with eating and drinking going on, and plenty of conversation and good feeling. I am glad and grateful to be able to lose myself among good regular people for a while. Then all of a sudden—I am thinking of something that actually happened—an officer gets up, a lieutenant, a stout, good-looking chap, whom I could never have believed guilty of any conduct unbecoming his uniform, and actually in good set terms asks the company's permission to read some verses of his own composition. Everybody looks disconcerted, they laugh and tell him to go on, and he takes them at their word and reads from a sheet of paper he has up to now been hiding in his coat-tail pocket—something about love and music, as deeply felt as it is inept. But I ask you, a lieutenant! A man of the world! He surely did not need to. . . . Well, the inevitable result is long faces, silence, a little artificial applause, everybody thoroughly uncomfortable. The first sensation I am conscious of is guilt—I feel partly responsible for the disturbance this rash youth has brought upon the company, and no wonder, for I, as a member of the same guild, am a target for some of the unfriendly glances. But next minute I realize something else—this man for whom just now I felt the greatest respect has suddenly sunk in my eyes. I feel a benevolent pity. Along with some other brave and good-natured gentlemen I go up and speak

to him. 'Congratulations, Herr Lieutenant,' I say, 'that is a very pretty talent you have. It was charming.' And I am within an ace of clapping him on the shoulder. But is that the way one is supposed to feel towards a lieutenant—benevolent? . . . It was his own fault. There he stood, suffering embarrassment for the mistake of thinking that one may pluck a single leaf from the laurel tree of art without paying for it with his life. No, there I go with my colleague, the convict banker—but don't you find, Lisabeta, that I have quite a Hamlet-like flow of oratory today?"

"Are you done, Tonio Kroger?"

"No. But there won't be any more."

"And quite enough too. Are you expecting a reply?"

"Have you one ready?"

"I should say. I have listened to you faithfully, Tonio, from beginning to end, and I will give you the answer to everything you have said this afternoon and the solution of the problem that has been upsetting you. Now the solution is that you, as you sit there, are, quite simply, a bourgeois."

"Am I?" he asked a little crestfallen.

"Yes; that hits you hard, it must. So I will soften the judgment just a little. You are a bourgeois on the wrong path, a bourgeois *manqué*."

Silence. Then he got up resolutely and took his hat and stick.

"Thank you, Lisabeta Ivanovna; now I can go home in peace. I am expressed."

Towards autumn Tonio Kroger said to Lisabeta Ivanovna:

"Well, Lisabeta, I think I'll be off. I need a change of air. I must get away, out into the open."

"Well, well, well, little Father! Does it please your Highness to go down to Italy again?"

"Oh, get along with your Italy, Lisabeta. I'm fed up with Italy, I spew it out of my mouth. It's a long time since I imagined I could belong down there. Art, eh? Blue-velvet sky, ardent wine, the sweets of sensuality. In short, I don't want it—I decline with thanks. The whole *bellezza* business makes me nervous. All those frightfully animated people down there with their black animal-like eyes; I don't like them either. These Romance peoples have no soul in their eyes. No, I'm going to take a trip to Denmark."

"To Denmark?"

"Yes. I'm quite sanguine of the results. I happen never to have been there, though I lived all my youth so close to it. Still I have always known and loved the country. I suppose I must have this northern tendency from my father, for my mother was really more for the *bellezza*, in so far, that is, as she cared very much one way or the other. But just take the books that are written up there, that clean, meaty, whimsical Scandinavian literature, Lisabeta, there's nothing like it, I love it. Or take the Scandinavian meals, those incomparable meals, which can only be digested in strong sea air (I don't know whether I can digest them in any sort of air), I know them from my home too, because we ate that way up there. Take even the names, the given names that people rejoice in up north; we have a good many of them in my part of the country too: Ingeborg, for instance, isn't it the purest poetry—like a harp-tone? And then the sea—up there it's the Baltic! . . . In a word, I am going, Lisabeta. I want to see the Baltic again and read the books and hear the names on their native heath; I want to stand on the terrace at Kronberg, where the ghost appeared to Hamlet, bringing despair and death to that poor, noble-souled youth. . . ."

"How are you going, Tonio, if I may ask? What route are you taking?"

"The usual one," he said, shrugging his shoulders, and blushed perceptibly. "Yes, I shall touch my—my point of departure, Lisabeta, after thirteen years, and that may turn out rather funny." She smiled.

"That is what I wanted to hear, Tonio Kröger. Well, be off, then, in God's name. Be sure to write to me, do you hear? I shall expect a letter full of your experiences in—Denmark."

And Tonio Kröger travelled north. He travelled in comfort (for he was wont to say that anyone who suffered inwardly more than other people had a right to a little outward ease); and he did not stay until the towers of the little town he had left rose up in the grey air. Among them he made a short and singular stay.

The dreary afternoon was merging into evening when the train pulled into the narrow reeking shed, so marvellously familiar. The volumes of thick smoke rolled up to the dirty glass roof and

STORIES OF A LIFETIME

wreathed to and fro there in long tatters, just as they had, long ago, on the day when Tonio Kröger, with nothing but derision in his heart, had left his native town.—He arranged to have his luggage sent to his hotel and walked out of the station.

There were the cabs, those enormously high, enormously wide black cabs drawn by two horses, standing in a rank. He did not take one, he only looked at them, as he looked at everything: the narrow gables, and the pointed towers peering above the roofs close at hand; the plump, fair, easy-going populace, with their broad yet rapid speech. And a nervous laugh mounted in him, mysteriously akin to a sob. He walked on, slowly, with the damp wind constantly in his face, across the bridge, with the mythological statues on the railings, and some distance along the harbour.

Good Lord, how tiny and close it all seemed! The comical little gabled streets were climbing up just as of yore from the port to the town! And on the ruffled waters the smoke-stacks and masts of the ships dipped gently in the wind and twilight. Should he go up that next street, leading, he knew, to a certain house? No, tomorrow. He was too sleepy. His head was heavy from the journey, and slow, vague trains of thought passed through his mind.

Sometimes in the past thirteen years, when he was suffering from indigestion, he had dreamed of being back home in the echoing old house in the steep, narrow street. His father had been there too, and reproached him bitterly for his dissolute manner of life, and this, each time, he had found quite as it should be. And now the present refused to distinguish itself in any way from one of those tantalizing dream-fabrications in which the dreamer asks himself if this be delusion or reality and is driven to decide for the latter, only to wake up after all in the end. . . . He paced through the half-empty streets with his head inclined against the wind, moving as though in his sleep in the direction of the hotel, the first hotel in the town, where he meant to sleep. A bow-legged man, with a pole at the end of which burned a tiny fire, walked before him with a rolling, seafaring gait and lighted the gas-lamps.

What was at the bottom of this? What was it burning darkly beneath the ashes of his fatigue, refusing to burst out into a clear blaze? Hush, hush, only no talk. Only don't make words! He would have liked to go on so, for a long time, in the wind, through the dusky, dreamily familiar streets—but everything was so

little and close together here. You reached your goal at once.

In the upper town there were arc-lamps, just lighted. There was the hotel with the two black lions in front of it; he had been afraid of them as a child. And there they were, still looking at each other as though they were about to sneeze; only they seemed to have grown much smaller. Tonio Kröger passed between them into the hotel.

As he came on foot, he was received with no great ceremony. There was a porter, and a lordly gentleman dressed in black, to do the honours; the latter, shoving back his cuffs with his little fingers, measured him from the crown of his head to the soles of his boots, obviously with intent to place him, to assign him to his proper category socially and hierarchically speaking and then mete out the suitable degree of courtesy. He seemed not to come to any clear decision and compromised on a moderate display of politeness. A mild-mannered waiter with yellow-white side-whiskers, in a dress suit shiny with age, and rosettes on his soundless shoes, led him up two flights into a clean old room furnished in patriarchal style. Its windows gave on a twilight view of courts and gables, very mediaeval and picturesque, with the fantastic bulk of the old church close by. Tonio Kröger stood awhile before this window; then he sat down on the wide sofa, crossed his arms, drew down his brows, and whistled to himself.

Lights were brought and his luggage came up. The mild-mannered waiter laid the hotel register on the table, and Tonio Kröger, his head on one side, scrawled something on it that might be taken for a name, a station, and a place of origin. Then he ordered supper and went on gazing in a space from his sofa-corner. When it stood before him he let it wait long untouched, then took a few bites and walked up and down an hour in his room, stopping from time to time and closing his eyes. Then he very slowly undressed and went to bed. He slept long and had curiously confused and ardent dreams.

It was broad day when he woke. Hastily he recalled where he was and got up to draw the curtains; the pale-blue sky, already with a hint of autumn, was streaked with frayed and tattered cloud; still, above his native city the sun was shining.

He spent more care than usual upon his toilette, washed and shaved and made himself fresh and immaculate as though about

to call upon some smart family where a well-dressed and flawless appearance was *de rigueur*; and while occupied in this wise he listened to the anxious beating of his heart.

How bright it was outside! He would have liked better a twilight air like yesterday's, instead of passing through the streets in the broad sunlight, under everybody's eye. Would he meet people he knew, be stopped and questioned and have to submit to be asked how he had spent the last thirteen years? No, thank goodness, he was known to nobody here, even if anybody remembered him, it was unlikely he would be recognized—for certainly he had changed in the meantime! He surveyed himself in the glass and felt a sudden sense of security behind his mask, behind his work-worn face, that was older than his years. . . . He sent for breakfast, and after that he went out, he passed under the disdainful eyes of the porter and the gentleman in black, through the vestibule and between the two lions, and so into the street.

Where was he going? He scarcely knew. It was the same as yesterday. Hardly was he in the midst of this long familiar scene, this stately conglomeration of gables, turrets, arcades, and fountains, hardly did he feel once more the wind in his face, that strong current wafting a faint and pungent aroma from far-off dreams, than the same mistiness laid itself like a veil about his senses. . . . The muscles of his face relaxed, and he looked at men and things with a look grown suddenly calm. Perhaps right there, on that street corner, he might wake up after all. . . .

Where was he going? It seemed to him the direction he took had a connection with his sad and strangely rueful dreams of the night. . . . He went to Market Square, under the vaulted arches of the Rathaus, where the butchers were weighing out their wares red-handed, where the tall old Gothic fountain stood with its manifold spires. He paused in front of a house, a plain narrow building, like many another, with a fretted baroque gable; stood there lost in contemplation. He read the plate on the door, his eyes rested a little while on each of the windows. Then slowly he turned away.

Where did he go? Towards home. But he took a roundabout way outside the walls—for he had plenty of time. He went over the Millwall and over the Holstenwall, clutching his hat, for the wind was rushing and moaning through the trees. He left the wall near the station, where he saw a train puffing busily past, idly

counted the coaches, and looked after the man who sat perched upon the last. In the Lindenplatz he stopped at one of the pretty villas, peered long into the garden and up at the windows, lastly conceived the idea of swinging the gate to and fro upon its hinges till it creaked. Then he looked awhile at his moist, rust-stained hand and went on, went through the squat old gate, along the harbour, and up the steep, windy street to his parents' house.

It stood aloof from its neighbours, its gable towering above them; grey and sombre, as it had stood these three hundred years; and Tonio Kröger read the pious, half-illegible motto above the entrance. Then he drew a long breath and went in.

His heart gave a throb of fear, lest his father might come out of one of the doors on the ground floor, in his office coat, with the pen behind his ear, and take him to task for his excesses. He would have found the reproach quite in order; but he got past unchidden. The inner door was ajar, which appeared to him reprehensible though at the same time he felt as one does in certain broken dreams where obstacles melt away of themselves, and one presses onward in marvellous favour with fortune. The wide entry, paved with great square flags, echoed to his tread. Opposite the silent kitchen was the curious projecting structure, of rough boards, but cleanly varnished, that had been the servants' quarters. It was quite high up and could only be reached by a sort of ladder from the entry. But the great cupboards and carven presses were gone. The son of the house climbed the majestic staircase, with his hand on the white-enamelled, fret-work balustrade. At each step he lifted his hand, and put it down again with the next as though testing whether he could call back his ancient familiarity with the stout old railing. . . . But at the landing of the entresol he stopped. For on the entrance door was a white plate; and on it in black letters he read: "Public Library."

"Public Library?" thought Tonio Kröger. What were either literature or the public doing here? He knocked . . . heard a "Come in," and obeying it with gloomy suspense gazed upon a scene of most unhappy alteration.

The storey was three rooms deep, and all the doors stood open. The walls were covered nearly all the way up with long rows of books in uniform bindings standing in dark-coloured bookcases. In each room a poor creature of a man sat writing behind

a sort of counter. The farthest two just turned their heads, but the nearest got up in haste and, leaning with both hands on the table, stuck out his head, pursed his lips, lifted his brows, and looked at the visitor with eagerly blinking eyes.

"I beg pardon," said Tonio Kröger without turning his eyes from the book-shelves. "I am a stranger here, seeing the sights. So this is your Public Library? May I examine your collection a little?"

"Certainly, with pleasure," said the official, blinking still more violently. "It is open to everybody. . . . Pray look about you. Should you care for a catalogue?"

"No, thanks," answered Tonio Kröger, "I shall soon find my way about." And he began to move slowly along the walls, with the appearance of studying the rows of books. After a while he took down a volume, opened it, and posted himself at the window.

This was the breakfast-room. They had eaten here in the morning instead of in the big dining-room upstairs, with its white statues of gods and goddesses standing out against the blue walls. . . . Beyond there had been a bedroom, where his father's mother had died—only after a long struggle, old as she was, for she had been of a pleasure-loving nature and clung to life. And his father too had drawn his last breath in the same room: that tall, correct, slightly melancholy and pensive gentleman with the wild flower in his buttonhole. . . . Tonio had sat at the foot of his death-bed, quite given over to unutterable feelings of love and grief. His mother had knelt at the bedside, his lovely, fiery mother, dissolved in hot tears; and after that she had withdrawn with her artist into the far blue south. . . . And beyond still, the small third room, likewise full of books and presided over by a shabby man—that had been for years on end his own. Thither he had come after school and a walk—like today's; against that wall his table had stood with the drawer where he had kept his first clumsy, heartfelt attempts at verse. . . . The walnut tree . . . a pang went through him. He gave a sidewise glance out at the window. The garden lay desolate, but there stood the old walnut tree where it used to stand, groaning and creaking heavily in the wind. And Tonio Kröger let his gaze fall upon the book he had in his hands, an excellent piece of work, and very familiar. He followed the black lines of print, the paragraphs, the flow of words that flowed with so

much art, mounting in the ardour of creation to a certain climax and effect and then as artfully breaking off. . . .

"Yes, that was well done," he said; put back the book and turned away. Then he saw that the functionary still stood bolt-upright, blinking with a mingled expression of zeal and misgiving.

"A capital collection, I see," said Tonio Kröger. "I have already quite a good idea of it. Much obliged to you. Good-bye." He went out; but it was a poor exit, and he felt sure the official would stand there perturbed and blinking for several minutes.

He felt no desire for further researches. He had been home. Strangers were living upstairs in the large rooms behind the pillared hall; the top of the stairs was shut off by a glass door which used not to be there, and on the door was a plate. He went away, down the steps, across the echoing corridor, and left his parental home. He sought a restaurant, sat down in a corner, and brooded over a heavy, greasy meal. Then he returned to his hotel.

"I am leaving," he said to the fine gentleman in black. "This afternoon." And he asked for his bill, and for a carriage to take him down to the harbour where he should take the boat for Copenhagen. Then he went up to his room and sat there stiff and still, with his cheek on his hand, looking down on the table before him with absent eyes. Later he paid his bill and packed his things. At the appointed hour the carriage was announced and Tonio Kröger went down in travel array.

At the foot of the stairs the gentleman in black was waiting.

"Beg pardon," he said, shoving back his cuffs with his little fingers. . . . "Beg pardon, but we must detain you just a moment. Herr Seehaase, the proprietor, would like to exchange two words with you. A matter of form. . . . He is back there. . . . If you will have the goodness to step this way. . . . It is only Herr Seehaase, the proprietor."

And he ushered Tonio Kröger into the background of the vestibule. . . . There, in fact, stood Herr Seehaase. Tonio Kröger recognized him from old time. He was snuff-fat, and bow-legged. His shaven side-whisker was white, but he wore the same old low-cut dress coat and little velvet cap embroidered in green. He was not alone. Beside him, at a little high desk fastened into the wall, stood a policeman in a helmet, his gloved right hand resting on a document in coloured inks; he turned towards Tonio Kröger with his

honest, soldierly face as though he expected Tonio to sink into the earth at his glance.

Tonio Kröger looked at the two and confined himself to waiting.

"You came from Munich?" the policeman asked at length in a heavy, good-natured voice.

Tonio Kröger said he had.

"You are going to Copenhagen?"

"Yes, I am on the way to a Danish seashore resort."

"Seashore resort? Well, you must produce your papers," said the policeman. He uttered the last word with great satisfaction.

"Papers . . . ?" He had no papers. He drew out his pocket-book and looked into it; but aside from notes there was nothing there but some proof-sheets of a story which he had taken along to finish reading. He hated relations with officials and had never got himself a passport. . . .

"I am sorry," he said, "but I don't travel with papers."

"Ah!" said the policeman. "And what might be your name?"

Tonio replied.

"Is that a fact?" asked the policeman, suddenly erect, and expanding his nostrils as wide as he could. . . .

"Yes, that is a fact," answered Tonio Kröger.

"And what are you, anyhow?"

Tonio Kröger gulped and gave the name of his trade in a firm voice. Herr Seehaase lifted his head and looked him curiously in the face.

"H'm," said the policeman. "And you give out that you are not identical with an individdle named"—he said "individdle" and then, referring to his document in coloured inks, spelled out an involved, fantastic name which mingled all the sounds of all the races—Tonio Kröger forgot it next minute—"of unknown parentage and unspecified means," he went on, "wanted by the Munich police for various shady transactions, and probably in flight towards Denmark?"

"Yes, I give out all that, and more," said Tonio Kröger, wriggling his shoulders. The gesture made a certain impression.

"What? Oh, yes, of course," said the policeman. "You say you can't show any papers—"

Herr Seehaase threw himself into the breach.

"It is only a formality," he said pacifically, "nothing else. You

must bear in mind the official is only doing his duty. If you could only identify yourself somehow—some document . . .”

They were all silent. Should he make an end of the business, by revealing to Herr Seehaase that he was no swindler without specified means, no gypsy in a green wagon, but the son of the late Consul Kröger, a member of the Kröger family? No, he felt no desire to do that. After all, were not these guardians of civic order within their right? He even agreed with them—up to a point. He shrugged his shoulders and kept quiet.

“What have you got, then?” asked the policeman. “In your portfolio, I mean?”

“Here? Nothing. Just a proof-sheet,” answered Tonio Kröger.

“Proof sheet? What’s that? Let’s see it.”

And Tonio Kröger handed over his work. The policeman spread it out on the shelf and began reading. Herr Seehaase drew up and shared it with him. Tonio Kröger looked over their shoulders to see what they read. It was a good moment, a little effect he had worked out to a perfection. He had a sense of self-satisfaction.

“You see,” he said, “there is my name. I wrote it, and it is going to be published, you understand.”

“All right, that will answer,” said Herr Seehaase with decision, gathered up the sheets and gave them back. “That will have to answer, Peterson,” he repeated crisply, shutting his eyes and shaking his head as though to see and hear no more. “We must not keep the gentleman any longer. The carriage is waiting. I implore you to pardon the little inconvenience, sir. The officer has only done his duty, but I told him at once he was on the wrong track. . . .”

“Indeed!” thought Tonio Kröger.

The officer seemed still to have his doubts; he muttered something else about individual and document. But Herr Seehaase, overflowing with regrets, led his guest through the vestibule, accompanied him past the two lions to the carriage, and himself, with many respectful bows, closed the door upon him. And then the funny, high, wide old cab rolled and rattled and bumped down the steep, narrow street to the quay.

And such was the manner of Tonio Kröger’s visit to his ancestral home.

Night fell and the moon swam up with silver gleam as Tonio Kroger's boat reached the open sea. He stood at the prow wrapped in his cloak against a mounting wind, and looked beneath into the dark going and coming of the waves as they hovered and swayed and came on, to meet with a clap and shoot erratically away in a bright gush of foam.

He was lulled in a mood of still enchantment. The episode at the hotel, their wanting to arrest him for a swindler in his own home, had cast him down a little, even although he found it quite in order in a certain way. But after he came on board he had watched, as he used to do as a boy with his father, the lading of goods into the deep bowels of the boat, amid shouts of mingled Danish and Plattdeutsch, not only boxes and bales, but also a Bengal tiger and a polar bear were lowered in cages with stout iron bars. They had probably come from Hamburg and were destined for a Danish menagerie. He had enjoyed these distractions. And as the boat glided along between flat river banks he quite forgot Officer Petersen's inquisition, while all the rest—his sweet, sad, rueful dreams of the night before, the walk he had taken, the walnut tree—had welled up again in his soul. The sea opened out and he saw in the distance the beach where he as a lad had been let to listen to the ocean's summer dreams, saw the flashing of the lighthouse tower and the lights of the Kuhhaus where he and his parents had lived . . . The Baltic! He bent his head to the strong salt wind, it came sweeping on, it enfolded him, made him faintly giddy and a little deaf, and in that mild confusion of the senses all memory of evil, of anguish and error, effort and exertion of the will, sank away into joyous oblivion and were gone. The roaring, foaming, flapping, and slapping all about him came to his ears like the groan and rustle of an old walnut tree, the creaking of a garden gate. . . . More and more the darkness came on.

"The stars! Oh, by Lord, look at the stars!" a voice suddenly said, with a heavy singsong accent that seemed to come out of the inside of a tun. He recognized it. It belonged to a young man with red-blond hair who had been Tonio Kroger's neighbour at dinner in the salon. His dress was very simple, his eyes were red, and he had the moist and chilly look of a person who has just bathed. With nervous and self-conscious movements he had taken unto himself an astonishing quantity of lobster omelet. Now he

leaned on the rail beside Tonio Kroger and looked up at the skies, holding his chin between thumb and forefinger. Beyond a doubt he was in one of those rare and festal and edifying moods that cause the barriers between man and man to fall, when the heart opens even to the stranger, and the mouth utters that which otherwise it would blush to speak. . . .

"Look, by dear sir, just look at the stars. There they stand and glitter; by goodness, the whole sky is full of them! And I ask you, when you stand and look up at them, and realize that many of them are a hundred times larger than the earth, how does it make you feel? Yes, we have invented the telegraph and the telephone and all the triumphs of our modern times. But when we look up there, after all we have to recognize and understand that we are worms, miserable worms, and nothing else. Ah I might, sir, or ah I wrong? Yes, we are worms," he answered himself, and nodded meekly and abjectly in the direction of the firmament.

"Ah, no he has no literature in his belly," thought Tonio Kroger. And he recalled something he had lately read, an essay by a famous French writer on cosmological and psychological philosophies, a very delightful *causette*.

He made some sort of reply to the young man's feeling remarks, and they went on talking, leaning over the rail, and looking into the night with its movement and hftful lights. The young man, it seemed, was a Hamburg merchant on his holiday.

"You ought to travel to Copenhagen on the boat, thinks I, and so here I am, and so far it's been fine. But they shouldn't have given us the lobster omelet, sir, for it's going to be storby—the captain said so himself—and that's do joke with indigestible food like that in your stomach. . . ."

Tonio Kroger listed to all this engaging artlessness and was privately drawn to it.

"Yes," he said, "all the food up here is too heavy. It makes one lazy and melancholy."

"Belancholy?" repeated the young man, and looked at him, taken aback. Then he asked, suddenly: "You are a stradger up here, sir?"

"Yes, I come from a long way off," answered Tonio Kroger vaguely, waving his arm.

"But you're right," said the youth, "Lord knows you are right

about the belancholy. I am dearly always belancholy, but specially on evedings like this when there are stars in the sky." And he supported his chin again with thumb and forefinger.

"Surely this man writes verses," thought Tonio Kröger; "business man's verses, full of deep feeling and single-mindedness."

Evening drew on. The wind had grown so violent as to prevent them from talking. So they thought they would sleep a bit, and wished each other good-night.

Tonio Kröger stretched himself out on the narrow cabin bed, but he found no repose. The strong wind with its sharp tang had power to rouse him; he was strangely restless with sweet anticipations. Also he was violently sick with the motion of the ship as she glided down a steep mountain of wave and her screw vibrated as in agony, free of the water. He put on all his clothes again and went up to the deck.

Clouds raced across the moon. The sea danced. It did not come on in full-bodied, regular waves; but far out in the pale and flickering light the water was lashed, torn, and tumbled; leaped upward like great licking flames; hung in jagged and fantastic shapes above dizzy abysses, where the foam seemed to be tossed by the playful strength of colossal arms and flung upward in all directions. The ship had a heavy passage; she lurched and stamped and groaned through the welter; and far down in her bowels the tiger and the polar bear voiced their acute discomfort. A man in an oilskin, with the hood drawn over his head and a lantern strapped to his chest, went straddling painfully up and down the deck. And at the stern, leaning far out, stood the young man from Hamburg suffering the worst. "Lord!" he said in a hollow, quavering voice, when he saw Tonio Kröger. "Look at the uproar of the elebents, sir!" But he could say no more—he was obliged to turn hastily away.

Tonio Kröger clutched at a taut rope and looked abroad into the arrogance of the elements. His exultation outvied storm and wave; within himself he chanted a song to the sea, instinct with love of her: "O thou wild friend of my youth, Once more I behold thee—" But it got no further, he did not finish it. It was not fated to receive a final form nor in tranquillity to be welded to a perfect whole. For his heart was too full. . . .

Long he stood; then stretched himself out on a bench by the pilot-house and looked up at the sky, where stars were flickering.

He even slept a little. And when the cold foam splashed his face it seemed in his half-dreams like a caress.

Perpendicular chalk-cliffs, ghostly in the moonlight, came in sight. They were nearing the island of Möen. Then sleep came again, broken by salty showers of spray that bit into his face and made it stiff. . . . When he really roused, it was broad day, fresh and palest grey, and the sea had gone down. At breakfast he saw the young man from Hamburg again, who blushed rosy-red for shame of the poetic indiscretions he had been betrayed into by the dark, ruffled up his little red-blond moustache with all five fingers, and called out a brisk and soldierly good-morning—after that he studiously avoided him.

And Tonio Kröger landed in Denmark. He arrived in Copenhagen, gave tips to everybody who laid claim to them, took a room at a hotel, and roamed the city for three days with an open guide-book and the air of an intelligent foreigner bent on improving his mind. He looked at the king's New Market and the "Horse" in the middle of it, gazed respectfully up the columns of the Frauenkirch, stood long before Thorwaldsen's noble and beautiful statuary, climbed the round tower, visited castles, and spent two lively evenings in the Tivoli. But all this was not exactly what he saw.

The doors of the houses—so like those in his native town, with open-work gables of baroque shape—bore names known to him of old; names that had a tender and precious quality, and withal in their syllables an accent of plaintive reproach, of repining after the lost and gone. He walked, he gazed, drawing deep, lingering draughts of moist sea air, and everywhere he saw eyes as blue, hair as blond, faces as familiar, as those that had visited his rueful dreams the night he had spent in his native town. There in the open street it befell him that a glance, a ringing word, a sudden laugh would pierce him to his marrow.

He could not stand the bustling city for long. A restlessness, half memory and half hope, half foolish and half sweet, possessed him; he was moved to drop this rôle of ardently inquiring tourist and lie somewhere, quite quietly, on a beach. So he took ship once more and travelled under a cloudy sky, over a black water, northwards along the coast of Seeland towards Helsingör. Thence he drove, at once, by carriage, for three-quarters of an hour, along and above

the sea, reaching at length his ultimate goal, the little white "bath-hotel" with green blinds. It stood surrounded by a settlement of cottages, and its shingled turret tower looked out on the beach and the Swedish coast. Here he left the carriage, took possession of the light room they had ready for him, filled shelves and presses with his kit, and prepared to stop awhile.

It was well on in September; not many guests were left in Aalsgaard. Meals were served on the ground floor, in the great beamed dining-room, whose lofty windows led out upon the veranda and the sea. The landlady presided, an elderly spinster with white hair and faded eyes, a faint colour in her cheek and a feeble twittering voice. She was for ever arranging her red hands to look well upon the table-cloth. There was a short-necked old gentleman, quite blue in the face, with a grey sailor beard; a fish-dealer he was, from the capital, and strong at the German. He seemed entirely congested and inclined to apoplexy; breathed in short gasps, kept putting his beringed first finger to one nostril, and snorting violently to get a passage of air through the other. Notwithstanding, he addressed himself constantly to the whisky-bottle, which stood at his place at luncheon and dinner, and breakfast as well. Besides him the company consisted only of three tall American youths with their governor or tutor, who kept adjusting his glasses in unbroken silence. All day long he played football with his charges, who had narrow, taciturn faces and reddish-yellow hair parted in the middle. "Please pass the wurst," said one. "That's not wurst, it's *schinken*," said the other, and thus was the extent of their conversation, as the rest of the time they sat there dumb, drinking hot water.

Tonio Kröger could have wished himself no better table-companions. He revelled in the peace and quiet, listened to the Danish palatals, the clear and the clouded vowels in which the fish-dealer and the landlady desultorily conversed; modestly exchanged views with the fish-dealer on the state of the barometer, and then left the table to go through the veranda and on to the beach once more, where he had already spent long, long morning hours.

Sometimes it was still and summery there. The sea lay idle and smooth, in stripes of blue and russet and bottle-green, played all across with glittering silvery lights. The seaweed shrivelled in the

sun and the jelly-fish lay steaming. There was a faintly stagnant smell and a whiff of tar from the fishing-boat against which Tonio Kröger leaned, so standing that he had before his eyes not the Swedish coast but the open horizon, and in his face the pure, fresh breath of the softly breathing sea.

Then grey, stormy days would come. The waves lowered their heads like bulls and charged against the beach; they ran and ramped high up the sands and left them strewn with shining wet sea-grass, driftwood, and mussels. All abroad beneath an overcast sky extended ranges of billows, and between them foaming valleys palely green; but above the spot where the sun hung behind the cloud a patch like white velvet lay on the sea.

Tonio Kröger stood wrapped in wind and tumult, sunk in the continual dull, drowsy uproar that he loved. When he turned away it seemed suddenly warm and silent all about him. But he was never unconscious of the sea at his back; it called, it lured, it beckoned him. And he smiled.

He went landward, by lonely meadow-paths, and was swallowed up in the beech-groves that clothed the rolling landscape near and far. Here he sat down on the moss, against a tree, and gazed at the strip of water he could see between the trunks. Sometimes the sound of surf came on the wind—a noise like boards collapsing at a distance. And from the tree-tops over his head a cawing—hoarse, desolate, forlorn. He held a book on his knee, but did not read a line. He enjoyed profound forgetfulness, hovered disembodied above space and time; only now and again his heart would contract with a fugitive pain, a stab of longing and regret, into whose origin he was too lazy to inquire.

Thus passed some days. He could not have said how many and had no desire to know. But then came one on which something happened; happened while the sun stood in the sky and people were about; and Tonio Kröger, even, felt no vast surprise.

The very opening of the day had been rare and festal. Tonio Kröger woke early and suddenly from his sleep, with a vague and exquisite alarm; he seemed to be looking at a miracle, a magic illumination. His room had a glass door and balcony facing the sound; a thin white gauze curtain divided it into living- and sleeping-quarters, both hung with delicately tinted paper and furnished with an airy good taste that gave them a sunny and friendly

look. But now to his sleep-drunken eyes it lay bathed in a serene and roseate light, an unearthly brightness that gilded walls and furniture and turned the gauze curtain to radiant pink cloud. Tonio Kröger did not at once understand. Not until he stood at the glass door and looked out did he realize that this was the sunrise.

For several days there had been clouds and rain; but now the sky was like a piece of pale-blue silk, spanned shimmering above sea and land, and shot with light from red and golden clouds. The sun's disk rose in splendour from a crisply glittering sea that seemed to quiver and burn beneath it. So began the day. In a joyous daze Tonio Kröger flung on his clothes and, breakfasting in the veranda before everybody else, swam from the little wooden bath-house some distance out into the sound, then walked for an hour along the beach. When he came back, several omnibuses were before the door, and from the dining-room he could see people in the parlour next door where the piano was, in the veranda, and on the terrace in front; quantities of people sitting at little tables enjoying beer and sandwiches amid lively discourse. There were whole families, there were old and young, there were even a few children.

At second breakfast—the table was heavily laden with cold viands, roast, pickled, and smoked—Tonio Kröger inquired what was going on.

"Guests," said the fish-dealer. "Tourists and ball-guests from Helsingör. Lord help us, we shall get no sleep this night! There will be dancing and music, and I fear me it will keep up till late. It is a family reunion, a sort of celebration and excursion combined; they all subscribe to it and take advantage of the good weather. They came by boat and bus and they are having breakfast. After that they go on with their drive, but at night they will all come back for a dance here in the hall. Yes, damn it, you'll see we shan't get a wink of sleep."

"Oh, it will be a pleasant change," said Tonio Kröger.

After that there was nothing more said for some time. The landlady arranged her red fingers on the cloth, the fish-dealer blew through his nostril, the Americans drank hot water and made long faces.

Then all at once a thing came to pass: *Hans Hansen and Inge-*

borg Holm walked through the room.

Tonio Kröger, pleasantly fatigued after his swim and rapid walk, was leaning back in his chair and eating smoked salmon on toast; he sat facing the veranda and the ocean. All at once the door opened and the two entered hand-in-hand—calmly and unhurried. Ingeborg, blonde Inge, was dressed just as she used to be at Herr Knaak's dancing-class. The light flowered frock reached down to her ankles and it had a tulle fichu draped with a pointed opening that left her soft throat free. Her hat hung by its ribbons over her arm. She, perhaps, was a little more grown up than she used to be, and her wonderful plait of hair was wound round her head; but Hans Hansen was the same as ever. He wore his sailor overcoat with gilt buttons, and his wide blue sailor collar lay across his shoulders and back; the sailor cap with its short ribbons he was dangling carelessly in his hand. Ingeborg's narrow eyes were turned away; perhaps she felt shy before the company at table. But Hans Hansen turned his head straight towards them, and measured one after another defiantly with his steel-blue eyes; challengingly, with a sort of contempt. He even dropped Ingeborg's hand and swung his cap harder than ever, to show what manner of man he was. Thus the two, against the silent, blue dyed sea, measured the length of the room and passed through the opposite door into the parlour.

This was at half past eleven in the morning. While the guests of the house were still at table the company in the veranda broke up and went away by the side door. No one else came into the dining-room. The guests could hear them laughing and joking as they got into the omnibuses, which rumbled away one by one. . . "So they are coming back?" asked Tonio Kröger.

"That they are," said the fish-dealer. "More's the pity. They have ordered music, let me tell you—and my room is right above the dining-room."

"Oh, well, it's a pleasant change," repeated Tonio Kröger. Then he got up and went away.

That day he spent as he had the others, on the beach and in the wood, holding a book on his knee and blinking in the sun. He had but one thought; they were coming back to have a dance in the hall, the fish-dealer had promised they would; and he did nothing but be glad of this, with a sweet and timorous gladness such as he

had not felt through all these long dead years. Once he happened, by some chance association, to think of his friend Adalbert, the novelist, the man who had known what he wanted and betaken himself to the café to get away from the spring. Tonio Kröger shrugged his shoulders at the thought of him.

Luncheon was served earlier than usual, also supper, which they ate in the parlour because the dining-room was being got ready for the ball, and the whole house flung in disorder for the occasion. It grew dark; Tonio Kröger sitting in his room heard on the road and in the house the sounds of approaching festivity. The picnickers were coming back; from Helsingör, by bicycle and carriage, new guests were arriving; a fiddle and a nasal clarinet might be heard practising down in the dining-room. Everything promised a brilliant ball. . . .

Now the little orchestra struck up a march; he could hear the notes, faint but lively. The dancing opened with a polonaise. Tonio Kröger sat for a while and listened. But when he heard the march-time go over into a waltz he got up and slipped noiselessly out of his room.

From his corridor it was possible to go by the side stairs to the side entrance of the hotel and thence to the veranda without passing through a room. He took this route, softly and stealthily as though on forbidden paths, feeling along through the dark, relentlessly drawn by this stupid jiggling music, that now came up to him loud and clear.

The veranda was empty and dim, but the glass door stood open into the hall, where shone two large oil lamps, furnished with bright reflectors. Thither he stole on soft feet; and his skin prickled with the thievish pleasure of standing unseen in the dark and spying on the dancers there in the brightly lighted room. Quickly and eagerly he glanced about for the two whom he sought. . . .

Even though the ball was only half an hour old, the merriment seemed in full swing; however, the guests had come hither already warm and merry, after a whole day of carefree, happy companionship. By bending forward a little, Tonio Kröger could see into the parlour from where he was. Several old gentlemen sat there smoking, drinking, and playing cards; others were with their wives on the plush-upholstered chairs in the foreground watching the dance. They sat with their knees apart and their hands resting on

them, puffing out their cheeks with a prosperous air; the mothers, with bonnets perched on their parted hair, with their hands folded over their stomachs and their heads on one side, gazed into the whirl of dancers. A platform had been erected on the long side of the hall, and on it the musicians were doing their utmost. There was even a trumpet, that blew with a certain caution, as though afraid of its own voice, and yet after all kept breaking and cracking. Couples were dipping and circling about, others walked arm-in-arm up and down the room. No one wore ballroom clothes; they were dressed as for an outing in the summertime: the men in countryfied suits which were obviously their Sunday wear; the girls in light-coloured frocks with bunches of field-flowers in their bodices. Even a few children were there, dancing with each other in their own way, even after the music stopped. There was a long-legged man in a coat with a little swallow-tail, a provincial lion with an eye-glass and frizzed hair, a post-office clerk or some such thing; he was like a comic figure stepped bodily out of a Danish novel; and he seemed to be the leader and manager of the ball. He was everywhere at once, bustling, perspiring, officious, utterly absorbed; setting down his feet, in shiny, pointed, military half-boots, in a very artificial and involved manner toes first; waving his arms to issue an order, clapping his hands for the music to begin; here, there, and everywhere, and glancing over his shoulder in pride at his great bow of office the streamers of which fluttered grandly in his rear.

Yes, there they were, those two, who had gone by Tonio Kröger in the broad light of day; he saw them again—with a joyful start he recognized them almost at the same moment. Here was Hans Hansen by the door, quite close; his legs apart, a little bent over, he was eating with circumspection a large piece of sponge-cake, holding his hand cupwise under his chin to catch the crumbs. And there by the wall sat Ingeborg Holm, Inge the fair; the post-office clerk was just mincing up to her with an exaggerated bow and asking her to dance. He laid one hand on his back and gracefully shoved the other into his bosom. But she was shaking her head in token that she was a little out of breath and must rest awhile, whereat the post-office clerk sat down by her side.

Tonio Kröger looked at them both, these two for whom he had in time past suffered love—at Hans and Ingeborg. They were Hans

and Ingeborg not so much by virtue of individual traits and similarity of costume as by similarity of race and type. This was the blond, fair-haired breed of the steel-blue eyes, which stood to him for the pure, the blithe, the untroubled in life; for a virginal aloofness that was at once both simple and full of pride. . . . He looked at them. Hans Hansen was standing there in his sailor suit, lively and well built as ever, broad in the shoulders and narrow in the hips; Ingeborg was laughing and tossing her head in a certain high-spirited way she had; she carried her hand, a schoolgirl hand, not at all slender, not at all particularly aristocratic, to the back of her head in a certain manner so that the thin sleeve fell away from her elbow—and suddenly such a pang of home-sickness shook his breast that involuntarily he drew farther back into the darkness lest someone might see his features twitch.

"Had I forgotten you?" he asked. "No, never. Not thee, Hans, not thee, Inge the fair! It was always you I worked for; when I heard applause I always stole a look to see if you were there. . . . Did you read *Don Carlos*, Hans Hansen, as you promised me at the garden gate? No, don't read it! I do not ask it any more. What have you to do with a king who weeps for loneliness? You must not cloud your clear eyes or make them dreamy and dim by peering into melancholy poetry. . . . To be like you! To begin again, to grow up like you, regular like you, simple and normal and cheerful, in conformity and understanding with God and man, beloved of the innocent and happy. To take you, Ingeborg Holm, to wife, and have a son like you, Hans Hansen--to live free from the curse of knowledge and the torment of creation, live and praise God in blessed mediocrity! Begin again? But it would do no good. It would turn out the same—everything would turn out the same as it did before. For some go of necessity astray, because for them there is no such thing as a right path."

The music ceased; there was a pause in which refreshments were handed round. The post-office assistant tripped about in person with a trayful of herring salad and served the ladies; but before Ingeborg Holm he even went down on one knee as he passed her the dish, and she blushed for pleasure.

But now those within began to be aware of a spectator behind the glass door; some of the flushed and pretty faces turned to measure him with hostile glances; but he stood his ground. Inge-

borg and Hans looked at him too, at almost the same time, both with that utter indifference in their eyes that looks so like contempt. And he was conscious too of a gaze resting on him from a different quarter; turned his head and met with his own the eyes that had sought him out. A girl stood not far off, with a fine, pale little face—he had already noticed her. She had not danced much, she had few partners, and he had seen her sitting there against the wall, her lips closed in a bitter line. She was standing alone now too; her dress was a thin light stuff, like the others, but beneath the transparent frock her shoulders showed angular and poor, and the thin neck was thrust down so deep between those meagre shoulders that as she stood there motionless she might almost be thought a little deformed. She was holding her hands in their thin mitts across her flat breast, with the finger-tips touching; her head was drooped, yet she was looking up at Tönio Kröger with black swimming eyes. He turned away. . . .

Here, quite close to him, were Ingeborg and Hans. He had sat down beside her—she was perhaps his sister—and they ate and drank together surrounded by other rosy-checked folk; they chattered and made merry, called to each other in ringing voices, and laughed aloud. Why could he not go up and speak to them? Make some trivial remark to him or her, to which they might at least answer with a smile? It would make him happy—he longed to do it; he would go back more satisfied to his room if he might feel he had established a little contact with them. He thought out what he might say; but he had not the courage to say it. Yes, this too was just as it had been: they would not understand him, they would listen like strangers to anything he was able to say. For their speech was not his speech.

It seemed the dance was about to begin again. The leader developed a comprehensive activity. He dashed hither and thither, adjuring everybody to get partners: helped the waiters to push chairs and glasses out of the way, gave orders to the musicians, even took some awkward people by the shoulders and shoved them aside. . . . What was coming? They formed squares of four couples each. . . . A frightful memory brought the colour to Tönio Kröger's cheeks. They were forming for a quadrille.

The music struck up, the couples bowed and crossed over. The leader called off; he called off—Heaven save us—in French! And

pronounced the nasals with great distinction. Ingeborg Holm danced close by, in the set nearest the glass door. She moved to and fro before him, forwards and back, pacing and turning; he caught a waft from her hair or the thin stuff of her frock, and it made him close his eyes with the old, familiar feeling, the fragrance and bitter-sweet enchantment he had faintly felt in all these days, that now filled him utterly with irresistible sweetness. And what was the feeling? Longing, tenderness? Envy? Self-contempt? . . . *Moulinet des dames!* "Did you laugh, Ingeborg the blonde, did you laugh at me when I disgraced myself by dancing the *moulinet*? And would you still laugh today even after I have become something like a famous man? Yes, that you would, and you would be right to laugh. Even if I in my own person had written the nine symphonies and *The World as Will and Idea* and painted the Last Judgment, you would still be eternally right to laugh. . . ." As he looked at her he thought of a line of verse once so familiar to him, now long forgotten: "I would sleep, but thou must dance." How well he knew it, that melancholy northern mood it evoked—its heavy inarticulateness. To sleep. . . . To long to be allowed to live the life of simple feeling, to rest sweetly and passively in feeling alone, without compulsion to act and achieve—and yet to be forced to dance, dance the cruel and perilous sword-dance of art; without even being allowed to forget the melancholy conflict within oneself; to be forced to dance, the while one loved. . . .

A sudden wild extravagance had come over the scene. The sets had broken up, the quadrille was being succeeded by a gallop, and all the couples were leaping and gliding about. They flew past Tonio Kröger to a maddeningly quick tempo, crossing, advancing, retreating, with quick, breathless laughter. A couple came rushing and circling towards Tonio Kröger; the girl had a pale, refined face and lean, high shoulders. Suddenly, directly in front of him, they tripped and slipped and stumbled. . . . The pale girl fell, so hard and violently it almost looked dangerous; and her partner with her. He must have hurt himself badly, for he quite forgot her, and, half rising, began to rub his knee and grimace; while she, quite dazed, it seemed, still lay on the floor. Then Tonio Kröger came forward, took her gently by the arms, and lifted her up. She looked dazed, bewildered, wretched; then suddenly her delicate

face flushed pink.

"*Tak, O, mange tak!*" she said, and gazed up at him with dark, swimming eyes.

"You should not dance any more, *Fräulein*," he said gently. Once more he looked round at *them*, at Ingeborg and Hans, and then he went out, left the ball and the veranda and returned to his own room.

He was exhausted with jealousy, worn out with the gaiety in which he had had no part. Just the same, just the same as it had always been. Always with burning cheeks he had stood in his dark corner and suffered for you, you blond, you living, you happy ones! And then quite simply gone away. Somebody *must* come now! Ingeborg *must* notice he had gone, must slip after him, lay a hand on his shoulder and say: "Come back and be happy. I love you!" But she came not at all. No, such things did not happen. Yes, all was as it had been, and he too was happy, just as he had been. For his heart was alive. But between that past and this present what had happened to make him become that which he now was? Icy desolation, solitude. mind, and art, forsooth!

He undressed, lay down, put out the light. Two names he whispered into his pillow, the few chaste northern syllables that meant for him his true and native way of love, of longing and happiness; that meant to him life and home, meant simple and heartfelt feeling. He looked back on the years that had passed. He thought of the dreamy adventures of the senses, nerves, and mind in which he had been involved; saw himself eaten up with intellect and introspection, ravaged and paralysed by insight, half worn out by the fevers and frosts of creation, helpless and in anguish of conscience between two extremes, lung to and fro between austerity and lust; *raffiné*, impoverished, exhausted by frigid and artificially heightened ecstasies; erring, forsaken, martyred, and ill—and sobbed with nostalgia and remorse.

Here in his room it was still and dark. But from below life's lulling, trivial waltz-rhythm came faintly to his ears.

Tonio Kröger sat up in the north, composing his promised letter to his friend Lisabeta Ivanovna.

"Dear Lisabeta down there in Arcady, whither I shall shortly return," he wrote: "Here is something like a letter, but it will

probably disappoint you, for I mean to keep it rather general. Not that I have nothing to tell; for indeed, in my way, I have had experiences; for instance, in my native town they were even going to arrest me . . . but of that by word of mouth. Sometimes now I have days when I would rather state things in general terms than go on telling stories.

"You probably still remember, Lisabeta, that you called me a *bourgeois*, a *bourgeois manqué*? You called me that in an hour when, led on by other confessions I had previously let slip, I confessed to you my love of life, or what I call life. I ask myself if you were aware how very close you came to the truth, how much my love of 'life' is one and the same thing as my being a *bourgeois*. This journey of mine has given me much occasion to ponder the subject.

"My father, you know, had the temperament of the north: solid, reflective, puritanically correct, with a tendency to melancholia. My mother, of indeterminate foreign blood, was beautiful, sensuous, naïve, passionate, and careless at once, and, I think, irregular by instinct. The mixture was no doubt extraordinary and bore with it extraordinary dangers. The issue of it, a *bourgeois* who strayed off into art, a bohemian who feels nostalgic yearnings for respectability, an artist with a bad conscience. For surely it is my *bourgeois* conscience makes me see in the artist life, in all irregularity and all genius, something profoundly suspect, profoundly disreputable; that fills me with this lovelorn *faiblesse* for the simple and good, the comfortably normal, the average uncondemned respectable human being.

"I stand between two worlds. I am at home in neither, and I suffer in consequence. You artists call me a *bourgeois*, and the *bourgeois* try to arrest me. . . . I don't know which makes me feel worse. The *bourgeois* are stupid; but you adorers of the beautiful, who call me phlegmatic and without aspirations, you ought to realize that there is a way of being an artist that goes so deep and is so much a matter of origins and destinies that no longing seems to it sweeter and more worth knowing than longing after the bliss of the commonplace.

"I admire those proud, cold beings who adventure upon the paths of great and daemonic beauty and despise 'mankind'; but I do not envy them. For if anything is capable of making a poet of a

literary man, it is my *bourgeois* love of the human, the living and usual. It is the source of all warmth, goodness, and humour; I even almost think it is itself that love of which it stands written that one may speak with the tongues of men and of angels and yet having it not is as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

"The work I have so far done is nothing or not much—as good as nothing. I will do better, Lisabeta—this is a promise. As I write, the sea whispers to me and I close my eyes. I am looking into a world unborn and formless, that needs to be ordered and shaped; I see into a whirl of shadows of human figures who beckon to me to weave spells to redeem them: tragic and laughable figures and some that are both together—and to these I am drawn. But my deepest and secretest love belongs to the blond and blue-eyed, the fair and living, the happy, lovely, and commonplace.

"Do not chide this love, Lisabeta; it is good and fruitful. There is longing in it, and a gentle envy; a touch of contempt and no little innocent bliss."

THE INFANT PRODIGY

THE INFANT prodigy entered. The hall became quiet.

It became quiet and then the audience began to clap, because somewhere at the side a leader of mobs, a born organizer, clapped first. The audience had heard nothing yet, but they applauded; for a mighty publicity organization had heralded the prodigy and people were already hypnotized, whether they knew it or not.

The prodigy came from behind a splendid screen embroidered with Empire garlands and great conventionalized flowers, and climbed nimbly up the steps to the platform, diving into the applause as into a bath; a little chilly and shivering, but yet as though into a friendly element. He advanced to the edge of the platform and smiled as though he were about to be photographed; he made a shy, charming gesture of greeting, like a little girl.

He was dressed entirely in white silk, which the audience found enchanting. The little white jacket was fancifully cut, with a sash underneath it, and even his shoes were made of white silk. But against the white socks his bare little legs stood out quite brown, for he was a Greek boy.

He was called Bibi Saccellaphylaccas. And such indeed was his name. No one knew what Bibi was the pet name for, nobody but the impresario, and he regarded it as a trade secret. Bibi had smooth black hair reaching to his shoulders; it was parted on the side and fastened back from the narrow domed forehead by a little silk bow. His was the most harmless childish countenance in the world, with an unfinished nose and guileless mouth. The area beneath his pitch-black mouselike eyes was already a little tired and visibly lined. He looked as though he were nine years old but was really

eight and given out for seven. It was hard to tell whether to believe this or not. Probably everybody knew better and still believed it, as happens about so many things. The average man thinks that a little falseness goes with beauty. Where should we get any excitement out of our daily life if we were not willing to pretend a bit? And the average man is quite right, in his average brains!

The prodigy kept on bowing until the applause died down, then he went up to the grand piano. and the audience cast a last look at its programmes. First came a *Marche solennelle*, then a *Rêverie*, and then *Le Hibou et les Moineaux*—all by Bibi Saccelaphyllaccas. The whole programme was by him, they were all his compositions. He could not score them, of course, but he had them all in his extraordinary little head and they possessed real artistic significance, or so it said, seriously and objectively, in the programme. The programme sounded as though the impresario had wrested these concessions from his critical nature after a hard struggle.

The prodigy sat down upon the revolving stool and felt with his feet for the pedals, which were raised by means of a clever device so that Bibi could reach them. It was Bibi's own piano, he took it everywhere with him. It rested upon wooden trestles and its polish was somewhat marred by the constant transportation—but all that only made things more interesting.

Bibi put his silk-shod feet on the pedals; then he made an artful little face, looked straight ahead of him and lifted his right hand. It was a brown, childish little hand; but the wrist was strong and unlike a child's, with well developed bones.

Bibi made his face for the audience because he was aware that he had to entertain them a little. But he had his own private enjoyment in the thing too, an enjoyment which he could never convey to anybody. It was that prickling delight, that secret shudder of bliss, which ran through him every time he sat at an open piano—it would always be with him. And here was the keyboard again, these seven black and white octaves, among which he had so often lost himself in abysmal and thrilling adventures—and yet it always looked as clean and untouched as a newly washed blackboard. This was the realm of music that lay before him. It lay spread out like an inviting ocean, where he might plunge in and

blissfully swim, where he might let himself be borne and carried away, where he might go under in night and storm, yet keep the mastery: control, ordain—he held his right hand poised in the air.

A breathless stillness reigned in the room—the tense moment before the first note came. . . . How would it begin? It began so. And Bibi, with his index finger, fetched the first note out of the piano, a quite unexpectedly powerful first note in the middle register, like a trumpet blast. Others followed, an introduction developed—the audience relaxed.

The concert was held in the palatial hall of a fashionable first-class hotel. The walls were covered with mirrors framed in gilded arabesques, between frescoes of the rosy and fleshly school. Ornamental columns supported a ceiling that displayed a whole universe of electric bulbs, in clusters darting a brilliance far brighter than day and filling the whole space with thin, vibrating golden light. Not a seat was unoccupied, people were standing in the side aisles and at the back. The front seats cost twelve marks; for the impresario believed that anything worth having was worth paying for. And they were occupied by the best society, for it was in the upper classes, of course, that the greatest enthusiasm was felt. There were even some children, with their legs hanging down demurely from their chairs and their shining eyes staring at their gifted little white-clad contemporary.

Down in front on the left side sat the prodigy's mother, an extremely obese woman with a powdered double chin and a feather on her head. Beside her was the impresario, a man of oriental appearance with large gold buttons on his conspicuous cuffs. The princess was in the middle of the front row—a wrinkled, shrivelled little old princess but still a patron of the arts, especially everything full of sensibility. She sat in a deep, velvet-upholstered arm-chair, and a Persian carpet was spread before her feet. She held her hands folded over her grey striped-silk breast, put her head on one side, and presented a picture of elegant composure as she sat looking up at the performing prodigy. Next to her sat her lady-in-waiting, in a green striped-silk gown. Being only a lady-in-waiting she had to sit up very straight in her chair.

Bibi ended in a grand climax. With what power this wee manikin belaboured the keyboard! The audience could scarcely

THE INFANT PRODIGY

trust its ears. The march theme, an infectious, swinging tune, broke out once more, fully harmonized, bold and showy; with every note Bibi flung himself back from the waist as though he were marching in a triumphal procession. He ended *fortissimo*, bent over, slipped sideways off the stool, and stood with a smile awaiting the applause.

•And the applause burst forth, unanimously, enthusiastically; the child made his demure little maidenly curtsy and people in the front seat thought: "Look what slim little hips he has! Clap, clap! Hurrah, bravo, little chap, Saccophylax or whatever your name is! Wait, let me take off my gloves—what a little devil of a chap he is!"

Bibi had to come out three times from behind the screen before they would stop. Some late-comers entered the hall and moved about looking for seats. Then the concert continued. Bibi's *Rêverie* murmured its numbers, consisting almost entirely of arpeggios, above which a bar of melody rose now and then, weak-winged. Then came *Le Hibou et les Moineaux*. This piece was brilliantly successful, it made a strong impression; it was an affective childhood fantasy, remarkably well envisaged. The bass represented the owl, sitting morosely rolling his filmy eyes; while in the treble the impudent, half-frightened sparrows chirped. Bibi received an ovation when he finished, he was called out four times. A hotel page with shiny buttons carried up three great laurel wreaths on to the stage and proffered them from one side while Bibi nodded and expressed his thanks. Even the princess shared in the applause, daintily and noiselessly pressing her palms together.

Ah, the knowing little creature understood how to make people clap! He stopped behind the screen, they had to wait for him; lingered a little on the steps of the platform, admired the long streamers on the wreaths—although actually such things bored him stiff by now. He bowed with the utmost charm, he gave the audience plenty of time to rave itself out, because applause is valuable and must not be cut short. "*Le Hibou* is my drawing card," he thought—this expression he had learned from the impresario "Now I will play the fantasy, it is a lot better than *Le Hibou*, of course, especially the C-sharp passage. But you idiots dote on the *Hibou*, though it is the first and the silliest thing I

wrote." He continued to bow and smile.

Next came a *Méditation* and then an *Étude*—the programme was quite comprehensive. The *Méditation* was very like the *Rêverie*—which was nothing against it—and the *Étude* displayed all of Bibi's virtuosity, which naturally fell a little short of his inventiveness. And then the *Fantaisie*. This was his favourite; he varied it a little each time, giving himself free rein and sometimes surprising even himself, on good evenings, by his own inventiveness.

He sat and played, so little, so white and shining, against the great black grand piano, elect and alone, above that confused sea of faces, above the heavy, insensitive mass soul, upon which he was labouring to work with his individual, differentiated soul. His lock of soft black hair with the white silk bow had fallen over his forehead, his trained and bony little wrists pounded away, the muscles stood out visibly on his brown childish cheeks.

Sitting there he sometimes had moments of oblivion and solitude, when the gaze of his strange little mouselike eyes with the big rings beneath them would lose itself and stare through the painted stage into space that was peopled with strange vague life. Then out of the corner of his eye he would give a quick look back into the hall and be once more with his audience.

"Joy and pain, the heights and the depths—that is my *Fantaisie*," he thought lovingly. "Listen, here is the C-sharp passage." He lingered over the approach, wondering if they would notice anything. But no, of course not, how should they? And he cast his eyes up prettily at the ceiling so that at least they might have something to look at.

All these people sat there in their regular rows, looking at the prodigy and thinking all sorts of things in their regular brains. An old gentleman with a white beard, a seal ring on his finger and a bulbous swelling on his bald spot, a growth if you like, was thinking to himself: "Really, one ought to be shamed." He had never got any further than "Ah, thou dearest Augustin" on the piano, and here he sat now, a grey old man, looking on while this little hop-o'-my-thumb performed miracles. Yes, yes, it is a gift of God, we must remember that. God grants His gifts, or He withholds them, and there is no shame in being an ordinary man. Like with the Christ Child.—Before a child one may kneel with-

out feeling shamed. Strange that thoughts like these should be so satisfying—he would even say so sweet, if it was not too silly for a tough old man like him to use the word. That was how he felt, anyhow.

Art . . . the business man with the parrot-nose was thinking. "Yes, it adds something cheerful to life, a little good white silk and a little tummy-ti-ti-tum. Really he does not play so badly. Fully fifty seats, twelve marks apiece, that makes six hundred marks—and everything else besides. Take off the rent of the hall, the lighting and the programmes, you must have fully a thousand marks profit. That is worth while."

That was Chopin he was just playing, thought the piano-teacher, a lady with a pointed nose; she was of an age when the understanding sharpens as the hopes decay. "But not very original—I will say that afterwards, it sounds well. And his hand position is entirely amateur. One must be able to lay a coin on the back of the hand—I would use a ruler on him."

Then there was a young girl, at that self-conscious and chlorotic time of life when the most ineffable ideas come into the mind. She was thinking to herself: "What is it he is playing? It is expressive of passion, yet he is a child. If he kissed me it would be as though my little brother kissed me—no kiss at all. Is there such a thing as passion all by itself, without any earthly object, a sort of child's-play of passion? What nonsense! If I were to say such things aloud they would just be at me with some more cod-liver oil. Such is life."

An officer was leaning against a column. He looked on at Bibi's success and thought: "Yes, you are something and I am something, each in his own way." So he clapped his heels together and paid to the prodigy the respect which he felt to be due to all the powers that be.

Then there was a critic, an elderly man in a shiny black coat and turned-up trousers splashed with mud. He sat in his free seat and thought: "Look at him, this young beggar of a Bibi. As an individual he has still to develop, but as a type he is already quite complete, the artist *par excellence*. He has in himself all the artist's exaltation and his utter worthlessness, his charlatanry and his sacred fire, his burning contempt and his secret raptures. Of course I can't write all that, it is too good. Of course, I should have been

an artist myself if I had not seen through the whole business so clearly."

Then the prodigy stopped playing and a perfect storm arose in the hall. He had to come out again and again from behind his screen. The man with the shiny buttons carried up more wreaths: four laurel wreaths, a lyre made of violets, a bouquet of roses. He had not arms enough to convey all these tributes, the impresario himself mounted the stage to help him. He hung a laurel wreath round Bibi's neck, he tenderly stroked the black hair—and suddenly as though overcome he bent down and gave the prodigy a kiss, a resounding kiss, square on the mouth. And then the storm became a hurricane. That kiss ran through the room like an electric shock, it went direct to peoples' marrow and made them shiver down their backs. They were carried away by a helpless compulsion of sheer noise. Loud shouts mingled with the hysterical clapping of hands. Some of Bibi's commonplace little friends down there waved their handkerchiefs. But the critic thought: "Of course that kiss had to come—it's a good old gag. Yes, good Lord, if only one did not see through everything quite so clearly --"

And so the concert drew to a close. It began at half past seven and finished at half past eight. The platform was laden with wreaths and two little pots of flowers stood on the lamp-stands of the piano. Bibi played as his last number his *Rhapsodie grecque*, which turned into the Greek national hymn at the end. His fellow-countrymen in the audience would gladly have sung it with him if the company had not been so august. They made up for it with a powerful noise and hullabaloo, a hot-blooded national demonstration. And the ageing critic was thinking: "Yes, the hymn had to come too. They have to exploit every vein—publicity cannot afford to neglect any means to its end. I think I'll criticize that as inartistic. But perhaps I am wrong, perhaps that is the most artistic thing of all. What is the artist? A jack-in-the-box. Criticism is on a higher plane. But I can't say that." And away he went in his muddy trousers.

After being called out nine or ten times the prodigy did not come any more from behind the screen but went to his mother and the impresario down in the hall. The audience stood about among the chairs and applauded and pressed forward to see Bibi

THE INFANT PRODIGY

close at hand. Some of them wanted to see the princess too. Two dense circles formed, one round the prodigy, the other round the princess, and you could actually not tell which of them was receiving more homage. But the court lady was commanded to go over to Bibi; she smoothed down his silk jacket a bit to make it look suitable for a court function, led him by the arm to the princess, and solemnly indicated to him that he was to kiss the royal hand. "How do you do it, child?" asked the princess. "Does it come into your head of itself when you sit down?" "Oui, madame," answered Bibi. To himself he thought: "Oh, what a stupid old princess!" Then he turned round shyly and uncourtier-like and went back to his family.

Outside in the cloak-room there was a crowd. People held up their numbers and received with open arms furs, shawls, and galoshes. Somewhere among her acquaintances the piano-teacher stood making her critique. "He is not very original," she said audibly and looked about her.

In front of one of the great mirrors an elegant young lady was being arrayed in her evening cloak and fur shoes by her brothers, two lieutenants. She was exquisitely beautiful, with her steel-blue eyes and her clean cut, well-bred face. A really noble dame. When she was ready she stood waiting for her brothers. "Don't stand so long in front of the glass, Adolf," she said softly to one of them, who could not tear himself away from the sight of his simple, good-looking young features. But Lieutenant Adolf thinks: What cheek! He would button his overcoat in front of the glass, just the same. Then they went out on the street where the arc-lights gleamed cloudily through the white mist. Lieutenant Adolf struck up a little nigger-dance on the frozen snow to keep warm, with his hands in his slanting overcoat pockets and his collar turned up.

A girl with untidy hair and swinging arms, accompanied by a gloomy-faced youth, came out just behind them. A child! she thought. A charming child. But in there he was an awe-inspiring . . . and aloud in a toneless voice she said: "We are all infant prodigies, we artists."

"Well, bless my soul!" thought the old gentleman who had never got further than Augustin on the piano, and whose boil was now concealed by a top hat. "What does all that mean? She

STORIES OF A LIFETIME

sounds very oracular." But the gloomy youth understood. He nodded his head slowly.

Then they were silent and the untidy-haired girl gazed after the brothers and sister. She rather despised them, but she looked after them until they had turned the corner.

A GLEAM

HUSH! LET us look into a human soul. On the wing, as it were, and only in passing; only for a page or so, for we are very busy. We come from Florence, Florence of the old days, where we have been dealing with high and tragic and ultimate concerns. And after that--whither? To court, perhaps, a royal castle? Who knows? Strange, faint-shimmering forms are taking their place on the stage.—Anna, poor little Baroness Anna, we have little time to spare for you.

Waltz-time, tinkling glasses; smoke, steam, hubbub, voices, dance-steps. We all know these little weaknesses of ours. Do we secretly love to linger at life's silliest feasts simply because there suffering wears bigger, more childlike eyes than in other places?

"*Avantageur!*" cried Baron Harry, the cavalry captain. He stopped dancing and called the whole length of the hall, one hand on his hip, the other still holding his partner embraced. "That's not a waltz, man, it's a funeral march! You have no rhythm in your body: you just float and sway about without any sense of time. Let Lieutenant von Gelbsattel play, so that we can feel the rhythm. Come on down, *Avantageur!* Dance, if you can do that better!"

And the *Avantageur* stood up, clapped his spurs together, and without a word yielded the platform to Lieutenant von Gelbsattel, who straightway began to make the piano ring and rattle under the blows from his sprawling white fingers.

Baron Harry, we observe, had music in him: waltz music, march music. He had rhythm, joviality, hauteur, good fortune, and a conquering-hero air. His gold-braided hussar jacket suited to

a T his glowing young face, unmarked by a single care, a single thought. He was burnt red, like a blond, though hair and moustache were dark—a piquant combination that appealed to the ladies—and the red scar across his right cheek gave a bold and dashing look to his open countenance. The scar might be from a wound, or a fall from a horse—in any case it was glorious. He danced divinely.

But the *Avantageur* floated and swayed—to extend the meaning of Baron Harry's phrase. His eyelids were much too large, so that he could never properly open his eyes; also his uniform fitted him rather carelessly and improbably round the waist—and God alone knew how he came to be a soldier. He had not cared much for this affair with the "Swallows" at the Casino, but even so he had come to it; he had to be careful not to give offence, for two reasons: first, because his origins were bourgeois, and second, because there was a book by him, that he had written or put together, or whatever the word is, a collection of stories, that anybody could buy in a book-shop. It must make people feel a little shy of him, of course.

The hall in the officers' Casino was long and wide—much too large for the thirty people who were disporting themselves in it. The walls and the musicians' platform were decorated with imitation draperies in red plaster, and from the ugly ceiling hung two crooked chandeliers, in which the candles stood askew and dripped hot wax. But the board floor had been scrubbed the whole forenoon by seven hussars told off for the job; and, after all, officers in a little hole like Hohendamm could not expect grandeur. Whatever was otherwise lacking to the feast was amply made up by its characteristic atmosphere; it had the sweetness of forbidden fruit, the reckless charm imparted by the presence of the "Swallows". Even the orderlies smirked knowingly as they renewed the supplies of champagne in the ice-tubs beside the white-covered tables which stood ranged along three walls of the room. They looked at each other and then down with a grin, as servants do when they assist irresponsibly at the excesses of their master. And all this with reference to the "Swallows".

The Swallows, the Swallows? Well, in short, they were the "Swallows from Vienna". Like migratory birds, thirty in the flock, they flew through the country, appearing in fifth-rate

variety-theatres and music-halls, where they stood on the stage in easy, unconventional poses and chirped their famous swallows' chorus:

"When the swallows come again
See them fly, *aren't they fly?*"

It was a good song, its humour was not obscure, it was always received with warm applause from the more knowing section of the public.

Well, the Swallows came to Hohendamm and sang in Gugelfing's beer-hall. A whole regiment of hussars were in barracks at Hohendamm, and the Swallows were justified in anticipating a good reception from representative circles. But they got more, they got an enthusiastic one. Evening after evening the unmarried officers sat at the girls' feet, listened to their swallow song, and drank their health in Gugelfing's yellow beer. It was not long before the married officers were there too; one evening Colonel von Rummler appeared in person, followed the programme with the closest interest, and afterwards expressed himself with unlimited approval in various places.

So then the lieutenants and cavalry captains conceived a plan to bring about closer contact with the Swallows: to invite a select group of them—say, ten of the prettiest—to a jolly champagne supper in the Casino. The upper orders could not take any public cognizance of the affair, of course; they had to refrain, however sore at heart. Not only the unmarried lieutenants, however, but also the married first lieutenants and cavalry captains took part, and also—this was the nub of the whole matter, the thing that gave it, so to speak, its "punch"—their wives.

Obstacles and misgivings? First Lieutenant von Levzahn brushed them all away with a phrase: what else, said he, were obstacles for, if not that soldiers might triumph over them! The good citizens of Hohendamm might rage when they heard that the officers were introducing their wives to the Swallows. Of course, they could not have done such a thing themselves. But there were heights, there were aloof and untrammelled regions of existence, where things might freely come to pass that in a lower sphere could only sully and dishonour. It was not as though the worthy natives of Hohendamm were not used to expecting all sort of

unexpectednesses from their hussars. The officers would ride along the middle of the pavement, in broad daylight, if it occurred to them so to do. They had done it. One evening pistols had been fired off in the Markplatz—nobody but the officers could have done that. And had anyone dared to murmur? The following anecdote was simply vouched for:

One morning, between five and six o'clock, Captain of Cavalry Baron Harry, feeling pretty jolly, was on his way home from a party, with his friends Captain of Cavalry von Hühnemann and Lieutenants Le Maistre, Baron Truchsess, von Trautenau, and von Lichterloh. Riding across the Old Bridge, they met a baker's boy, with a great basket of rolls on his shoulder, taking his way through the fresh morning air and whistling blithely as he went, "Give me that basket!" commanded Baron Harry. He seized it by the handle, swung it three times round his head, so skilfully that not a roll fell out, and sent it flying out into the stream on a great curve that showed the strength of his arm. At first the baker's boy was scared stiff. Then as he saw his rolls swimming about, he flung up his arms with a yell and behaved as though he had gone out of his mind. The gentlemen amused themselves for a while with his childish despair; then Baron Harry tossed him a gold piece which would have paid three times over for his loss and the officers rode laughing away home. Then the boy realized that these were the nobility and ceased his outcry.

This story lost no time in going the rounds—but who would have ventured to look askance? You might gnash your teeth over the pranks of Baron Harry and his friends, outwardly you took them with a smile. They were the lords and masters of Hohen-damm. And now the lords and masters were having a party for the Swallows.

The *Avantageur* seemed not to know how to dance a waltz any better than to play one. For he did not take a partner, but going up to one of the white tables made a bow and sat down near little Baroness Anna, Baron Harry's wife, to whom he addressed a few shy words. The capacity to amuse himself with a Swallow was simply beyond the poor young man. Actually he was afraid of that kind of girl; he fancied that whatever he said to one she looked at him as though she were surprised—and this hurt the *Avantageur*. But music, even the poorest, always put him into a

speechless, relaxed, and dreamy mood—it is often the way with these flabby and futile characters; and as the Baroness Anna, to whom he was entirely indifferent, made only absent answers to his remarks, they soon fell silent and confined themselves to gazing into the whirling scene, with the same somewhat wry smile, strange to say, on both their faces.

The candles flickered and sputtered so much that they became quite mis-shapen with great blobs of soft wax. Beneath them the couples twisted and turned in obedience to Lieutenant von Gelbsattel's inspiring strains. They put out their feet and pointed their toes, swung round with a flourish, then glided away. The gentlemen's long legs bent and balanced and sprang again. Petticoats flew. Gay hussar jackets whirled in abandon; voluptuously the ladies inclined their heads, yielding their waists to their partners' embraces.

Baron Harry held an amazingly pretty young Swallow pressed fairly close to his braided chest, putting his face down to hers and looking unswervingly into her eyes. Baroness Anna's gaze and her smile followed the pair. The long, lanky Lichterloh was trundling along with a plump and dumpy little Swallow in an extraordinary *décolletage*. But Frau Cavalry Captain von Hühnemann, who loved champagne above all else in life, there she was, dancing round and round under one of the chandeliers, completely absorbed, with another Swallow, a friendly creature whose freckled face beamed all over at the unprecedented honour done her. "My dear Baroness," Frau von Hühnemann said later to Frau First Lieutenant von Truchsess, "these girls are far from ignorant. They know all the cavalry garrisons in Germany off by heart." The pair were dancing together because there were two extra ladies; they were quite unaware that the other couples had gradually left the field to them until they were performing all by themselves. At last, however, they saw what had happened and stood there together in the centre of the hall overwhelmed from all sides by laughter and applause.

Next came the champagne, and the white-gloved orderlies ran from table to table pouring out. After that the Swallows were urged to sing again—they simply had to sing, no matter how out of breath they were.

They stood on the platform that ran along the narrow side of

the hall and made eyes at the company. Their shoulders and arms were bare, and they were dressed like the birds they represented, in long dark swallow-tails over pale grey waistcoats. They wore grey clocked stockings, and slippers with very low vamps and very high heels. There were blonde and brunette, there were the fat good-natured and the interestingly lean; there were some whose checks were staringly rouged, others with faces chalk-white like clowns. But the prettiest was the little dark one who had almond-shaped eyes and arms like a child's—she it was with whom Baron Harry had just danced. Baroness Anna, too, found that she was the prettiest one, and continued to smile.

The Swallows sang, and Lieutenant von Gelbsattel accompanied them, flinging back his torso and twisting round his head to look, while his long arms reached out after the keys. They sang as with one voice, that they were gay birds, that they had flown the world over and always left broken hearts behind them when they flew away. They sang another very tuneful piece beginning:

“Yes, yes, the arm-y,
How we love the arm-y,”

and ending with the same. And in response to vociferous requests they repeated their Swallow song, and the officers, who knew it by now as well as they did, joined lustily in the chorus:

“When the swallows come again
See them fly—aren't they fly?”

The whole hall rang with laughter and song and the stamping and clinking of spurred feet beating out the time.

Baroness Anna laughed too, at all the nonsense and extravagant spirits. She had laughed so much already, all the evening, that her head and her heart ached, and she would have been glad to close her eyes in darkness and quiet had not Harry been so zealous in his pleasures. “I feel so jolly today,” she had told her neighbour, at a moment when she believed what she said; but the neighbour had answered only by a mocking look, and she had realized that people do not say such things. If you really feel jolly, you act like it; to proclaim the fact makes it sound queer. On the other hand, it would have been quite impossible to say: “I feel so sad!”

Baroness Anna had grown up in the solitude and stillness of her

father's estate by the sea; she was at all times too much inclined to leave out of consideration such home truths as the above, despite her constitutional fear of putting people out and her constitutional yearning to be like them and have them love her. She had white hands and heavy, ash-blond hair—much too heavy for her narrow face with its delicate bones. Between her light eyebrows ran a perpendicular furrow, which gave a pained expression to her smile.

The truth was, she loved her husband. You must not laugh. She loved him even for the prank with the rolls. With a cowering and miserable love, though he betrayed her and daily abused her love like a schoolboy. She suffered for love of him as a woman does who despises her own weak tenderness and knows that power and the happiness of the powerful are justified on this earth. Yes, she yielded herself to love and its torments as once she had yielded herself to him when in a brief attack of tenderness he wooed her; with the hungry yearning of a lonely and dreamy soul, that craves for life and passion and an outlet for its emotions.

Waltz-time, tinkling glasses—hurly-burly and smoke, voices and dancing steps. That was Harry's world and his kingdom. It was the kingdom of her dreams as well. the world of love and life, the happy commonplace.

Social life, harmless, jolly conviviality—what a frightful thing it is, how enervating, how degrading; what a vain, alluring poison, what an insidious enemy to *carpe peace*! There she sat, evening after evening, night after night, a martyr to the glaring contrast between the utter emptiness round about her and the feverish excitement born of wine and coffee, of sensual music and the dance. She sat and looked on while Harry exercised his arts of fascination upon gay and pretty ladies—not because of their personal charms but because it fed his vanity to have people see him with them and know what a lucky man he was, how much in the centre of things, without one single ungratified longing. His vanity hurt her—and yet she loved it! How sweet to feel how handsome he was, how young, splendid, and bewitching! The infatuation of those other women would bring her own to fever pitch. And when afterwards, at the end of an evening spent by her in suffering for his sake, he would exhaust himself in stupid and self-centred expressions of enjoyment, there would come moments when her

hatred and scorn outweighed her love; in her heart she would call him a puppy and a trifle and try to punish him by not talking, by an absurd and desperate dumbness.

Are we guessing right, little Baroness Anna? Are we giving words to all that lay behind that poor little smile of yours as the Swallows sang their song? Behind that pitiable and shameful state, when you lay in bed afterwards in the grey dawn, thinking of the jests, the witticisms, the repartee, the social charms you should have displayed—and did not! Dreams come, in that grey dawn: you, quite worn with anguish, weep on his shoulder, he tries to console you with some of his empty, pleasant, commonplace phrases, and you are suddenly overcome with the mockery of your situation: you, lying on his shoulder, are shedding tears over the whole world!

Suppose he were to fall ill? Are we right in saying that some small trifling indisposition of his could call up a whole world of dreams for you, wherein you see him as your ailing child; in which he lies helpless and broken before you and at last, at last, belongs to you alone? Do not blush, do not shrink away! Trouble does sometimes make us think bad thoughts. But after all you might trouble yourself a little about the young *Avantageur* with the drooping eyelids, sitting there beside you—how gladly he would share his loneliness with you! Why do you scorn him? Why despise? Because he belongs to your own world, not to that other where pride and high spirits reign, and conscious triumph and dancing rhythm. Truly it is hard not to be at home in one world or in the other. We know. But there is no half-way house.

Applause broke in upon Lieutenant von Gelbsattel's final chords. The Swallows had finished their song. They scorned the steps of the platform and jumped down from the front, flopping or fluttering—the gentlemen rushed up to be of help. Baron Harry helped the little brunette Swallow with the childlike arms; he helped her very efficiently and with understanding for such things. He took her by the thigh and the waist, gave himself plenty of time to set her down, then almost carried her to the table, where he brimmed her glass with champagne till it overflowed, and touched his own to it, slowly, meaningfully, gazing into her eyes with a foolish, insistent smile. He had drunk a good deal, and the scar stood out on his forehead, that looked very white next his glowing

face. But his mood was a free and hilarious one, unclouded by any passion.

His table stood opposite to Baroness Anna's across the hall. As she sat talking idly with her neighbour she was listening greedily to the laughter over there and sending stolen and reproachful glances to watch every moment—in that painful state of tension which enables a person to carry on a conversation that complies with all the social forms, while actually being elsewhere all the time, and in the presence of the person one is watching.

Once or twice it seemed to her that the little Swallow's eye caught her own. Did she know her? Did she know who she was? How lovely she looked! How provocative, how full of fascination and thoughtless life! If Harry had been in love with her, if he had burned and suffered for her sake, his wife could have forgiven that, she could have understood and sympathized. And suddenly she became conscious that her own feeling for the little Swallow was warmer and deeper than Harry's own.

And the little Swallow herself? Dear me, her name was Emmy, and she was fundamentally commonplace. But she was wonderful too, with black strands of hair framing a wide, sensuous face, shadowed, almond-shaped eyes, a generous mouth full of shining teeth, and those arms like a child's. Loveliest of all were the shoulders—they had a way of moving with such ineffable suppleness in their sockets. Baron Harry took great interest in these shoulders; he would not have them covered, and set up a noisy struggle for the scarf which she would have put about them. And in all this, nobody in the whole hall saw, neither Baron Harry nor his wife nor anyone else, that this poor little waif, made sentimental by the wine she had drunk, had all the evening been casting longing glances at the young *Avantageur* whose lack of feeling for rhythm had caused his demission from the piano-stool. She had been drawn by the way he played, by his drooping lids, she found him noble, poetic, a being from a different world—whereas she was familiar unto boredom with Baron Harry's sort and all its works and ways. She was saddened, she was wretched, because the *Avantageur* cast not a thought in her direction.

The candles burned low and dim in the cigarette smoke and blue wreaths drifted above the company's heads. There was a smell of coffee on the heavy air, and odours and vapours of the

feast, made still more heady by the somewhat daring perfume affected by the Swallows, hung about the scene; the white tables and champagne coolers, the men and women, flirting, giggling and guffawing, weary-eyed and unrestrained.

Baroness Anna talked no more. Despair—and that frightful mixture of yearning, envy, love, and self-contempt which we call jealousy and which makes the world no good place at all to live in—had so subdued her heart that she had not power to counterfeit any more. Let him see how she felt, perhaps he would be ashamed—or at least he would have some feeling about her, of whatever kind, in his heart.

She looked across. The game over there was going rather far, everybody was watching and laughing. Harry had thought of a new kind of amorous struggle with the fair Swallow: it consisted in an exchange of rings. Bracing his knee against hers he held her fast to her chair, and snatched and tugged after her hand in a violent effort to open her little clenched fist. In the end he won. Amid noisy applause he wrenched off the narrow circlet she wore—it cost him some trouble—and triumphantly forced his own wedding ring upon her finger.

Then Baroness Anna stood up. Anger and pain, a longing to hide herself away in the dark with her sense of his so dear unworthiness; a desperate desire to punish him by making a scandal, by forcing him at all costs to acknowledge her presence—such were the emotions that overpowered her. She pushed back her chair, and pale as death she walked across the hall towards the door.

There was a great sensation. People were sobered, they looked at one another grave-faced. One or two gentlemen called out Harry's name. All at once it became still in the hall.

Then something very odd happened: the little Swallow—Emmy—suddenly and decisively espoused the Baroness's cause. Perhaps she was moved by a natural feminine instinct of pity for suffering love; perhaps her own pangs for the *Avantageur* with the drooping lids made her see in the little Baroness a fellow-sufferer. In any case, she acted—to the amazement of the company.

"You are coarse!" she said loudly, in the hush, and gave the dumbfounded Harry a great push. Just these three words: "You are coarse." And all at once she was at Baroness Anna's side, where

the latter stood lifting the latch of the door.

"Forgive!" she breathed—softly, as though no one else in the room were worthy to hear. "Here is the ring," and she slipped Harry's wedding ring into the Baroness's hand. And suddenly Baroness Anna felt the girl's broad, glowing face bend over this hand of hers; she felt burning on it a soft and passionate kiss. "Forgive!" whispered the little Swallow once more, and ran off.

But Baroness Anna stood outside in the darkness, still quite dazed, and waited for this unexpected event to take on shape and meaning within her. And it did: it was a joy, so warm, so sweet, so comfortable that for a moment she closed her eyes.

We stop here. No more, it is enough. Just this one priceless little detail, as it stands: there she was, quite enraptured and enchanted, simply because a little chit of a strolling chorus-girl had come and kissed her hand!

We leave you, Baroness Anna. We kiss your brow and take our leave; farewell, we must hurry away. Sleep, now. You will dream all night of the Swallow who came to you, and you will have a gleam of happiness.

For it brings happiness, it brings to the heart a little thrill and ecstasy of joy, when two worlds, between which longing plies, for one fleeting, illusory moment touch each other.

AT THE PROPHET'S

STRANGE REGIONS there are, strange minds, strange realms of the spirit, lofty and spare. At the edge of large cities, where street lamps are scarce and policemen walk by twos, are houses where you mount till you can mount no further, up and up into attics under the roof, where pale young geniuses, criminals of the dream, sit with folded arms and brood; up into cheap studios with symbolic decorations, where solitary and rebellious artists, inwardly consumed, hungry and proud, wrestle in a fog of cigarette smoke with devastatingly ultimate ideals. Here is the end: ice, chastity, rule. Here is valid no compromise, no concession, no half-way, no consideration of values. Here the air is so rarefied that the mirages of life no longer exist. Here reign defiance and iron consistency, the ego supreme amid despair; here freedom, madness, and death hold sway.

It was eight o'clock of Good Friday evening. Several of those whom Daniel had invited arrived together. Their invitations, written in a peculiar script on quarto paper headed by an eagle carrying a naked dagger in its talons, had summoned them to gather on this evening for the reading aloud of Daniel's Proclamations. Accordingly they had now met at the appointed hour, in the gloomy suburban street, in front of the cheap apartment-house wherein the prophet had his earthly dwelling.

Some of them knew each other and exchanged greetings. There were the Polish artist and the slender girl who lived with him; a lyric poet; a tall, black-bearded Semite with his heavy, pale wife, who dressed in long, flowing robes; a personage with an aspect soldierly yet somewhat sickly withal, who was a retired cavalry

captain and professed spiritualist; a young philosopher who looked like a kangaroo. Finally a novelist, a man with a stiff hat and a trim moustache. He knew nobody. He belonged to quite another sphere and was present by the merest chance, being on good terms with life and having written a book which was read in middle-class circles. He wore an unassuming air, as one who knew that he was here on sufferance and was grateful. At a little distance he followed the others into the house.

They climbed the stairs, one after the other, with their hands on the cast-iron rail. There was no talking; these were folk who knew the value of the Word and were not given to light speaking. In the dim light from the little oil lamps which stood on the window-ledges of the landings they read, as they passed, the names on the doors. The homes and business premises of an insurance official, a midwife, an "agent", a *blanchisseuse du fin*, a chiropodist—they passed by all these, not contemptuous, yet remote. They mounted the narrow staircase as up a dark shaft, cautiously yet firmly; for from far above, from the very last landing, came a faint gleam, a flickering glimmer from the top-most height.

At length they arrived at their goal under the roof, in the light of six candles in divers candlesticks, burning at the head of the stairs on a little table covered with a faded altar-cloth. On the door, which seemed, as indeed it was, the entrance to an attic, was fastened a large pasteboard shield with the name of Daniel on it in Roman lettering done in black crayon. They rang. A boy in a new blue suit and shiny boots opened to them, a pleasant-looking boy with a broad forehead; he had a candle in his hand and lighted them diagonally across the narrow dark corridor into an unpapered mansard-like space, entirely bare save for a wooden hat-stand. With a gesture accompanied by gurgling and babbling sounds but no words the boy invited them to take off their things. When the novelist, inspired by vague sympathy, addressed a question to him it became evident that the lad was dumb. He lighted the guests back across the corridor to another door and ushered them in. The novelist entered last. He was wearing a frock-coat and gloves and had made up his mind to behave as though he were in church.

The moderate-sized room which they entered was pervaded by a ceremonial and flickering illumination from twenty or twenty-

five candles. A young girl in a modest frock with white turn-over collar and cuffs, and with an innocent and simple face, stood near the door and gave each guest her hand in turn. This was Maria Josepha, Daniel's sister. The novelist had met her at a literary tea, where she sat bolt upright, cup in hand, and talked of her brother in a clear, earnest voice. Daniel was her adoration.

The novelist looked about for him.

"He is not here," said Maria Josepha. "He has gone out, I do not know where. But in spirit he will be with us and follow sentence by sentence the Proclamations which we shall hear read."

"Who is to read them?" asked the novelist with subdued and reverent mien. He took all this very seriously. He was a well-meaning and essentially modest man, full of respect for all the phenomena of this world, ready to learn and to esteem what was estimable.

"One of my brother's young men, whom we expect from Switzerland," Maria Josepha replied. "He is not here yet. He will be present at the right moment."

On a table opposite the door, with its upper edge resting against the slope of the mansard ceiling, was a large, hastily executed drawing. The candlelight revealed it as a picture of Napoleon, standing in a clumsy and autocratic pose warming his jack-boots at a fire. At the right of the entrance was a shrine or altar whereon, between candles in silver candelabra, was a painted figure of a saint with uplifted eyes and outstretched hands. Before the altar was a prie-dieu. A nearer view disclosed a little amateur photograph leaning at one foot of the saint: a portrait of a young man of some thirty years with pale, retreating brow and bony, vulture-like face, expressive of a ferociously concentrated intellect.

The novelist paused awhile before this picture of Daniel; then he cautiously ventured further into the room. It had a large round table with a polished yellow surface displaying in burnt-work the same design—the eagle with the dagger in its claws—which had been on the invitations. Behind the table were low wooden chairs and lording it over these one elevated seat like a throne, tall, narrow, austere, and Gothic. A long plain bench covered with cheap stuff stood under a low window, occupying the space formed by the meeting of wall and roof. The squat porcelain stove had evidently been giving out too much heat, for the window was open

upon a square section of the blue night outside, in whose deeps and distances the bright yellow points of the gas street lamps made an irregular pattern that tailed off into the open country.

But opposite the window the room narrowed to form an alcove lighted more brightly than the rest and furnished half as a cabinet, half as a chapel. On the right side stood a curtained book-shelf with lighted candelabra and antique lamps on top. On the left was a white-covered table holding a crucifix, a seven-branched candlestick, a goblet of red wine, and a piece of raisin cake on a plate. But at the very front was a low platform beneath an iron chandelier; on it stood a gilded plaster column. The capital of the column was covered with an altar-cloth of blood-red silk, and on that lay a thick folio manuscript—it contained Daniel's Proclamations. A light-coloured paper with little Empire garlands covered the walls and sloping ceiling; death-masks, rose-garlands, and a great rusty sword hung against the walls, and besides the large picture of Napoleon there were about the room various reproductions of Luther, Nietzsche, Moltke, Alexander VI, Robespierre, and Savonarola.

"It is all symbolic," said Maria Josepha, searching the novelist's reserved and respectful features to see if she could tell what impression the room made on him. Meanwhile other guests had come in, silently, solemnly; they all began to take their places in suitable attitudes on the benches and chairs. Besides the earlier comers there was a designer, a fantastic creature with a wizened childish face; a lame woman, who was in the habit of introducing herself as a priestess of Eros; an unmarried young mother whose aristocratic family had cast her out, and who was admitted into the circle solely on the ground of her motherhood, since intellectual pretensions she had none; an elderly authoress and a deformed musician—in all some twelve persons. The novelist had retreated into the window-alcove, and Maria Josepha sat near the door, her hands close together on her knees. Thus they awaited the young man from Switzerland, who would be present at the right moment.

Suddenly another guest arrived—a rich woman who out of sheer amateurishness had a habit of frequenting such gatherings as this. She came from the city in her satin-lined coupé, from her splendid house with the tapestries on the walls and the giallo-antico door-jambs; she had come all the way up the stairs and in at

the door, sweet-scented, luxurious, lovely, in a blue cloth frock with yellow embroidery, a Paris hat on her red-brown hair, and a smile in her Titian eyes. She came out of curiosity, out of boredom, out of craving for something different, out of amiable extravagance, out of pure universal goodwill, which is rare enough in this world. She greeted Daniel's sister, also the novelist, who had entrée at her house, and sat down on the bench under the window, between the priestess of Eros and the kangaroo-philosopher—quite as though she were used to such things.

"I was almost too late," said she softly, with her lovely mobile lips, to the novelist as he sat behind her. "I had people at tea; it was rather dragged out."

The novelist was slightly overcome; how thankful he was that he had on presentable clothes! "How beautiful she is!" thought he. "Actually she is worthy of being her daughter's mother."

"And Fräulein Sonia?" he asked over her shoulder. "You have not brought Fräulein Sonia with you?"

Sonia was the rich woman's daughter; in the novelist's eyes altogether too good to be true, a marvellous creature, a consummate cultural product, an achieved ideal. He said her name twice because it gave him an indescribable pleasure to pronounce it.

"Sonia is a little ailing," said the rich woman. "Yes, imagine, she has a bad foot. Oh, nothing—a swelling, something like a little inflammation or gathering. It has been lanced. The lancing may not have been necessary but she wanted it done."

"She wanted it done," repeated the novelist in an enraptured whisper. "How characteristic! But how may I express my sympathy for the affliction?"

"Of course, I will give her your greetings," said the rich woman. And as he was silent: "Is not that enough for you?"

"No, that is not enough for me," said he, quite low; and as she had a certain respect for his writing she replied with a smile:

"Then send her a few flowers."

"Oh, thanks!" said he. "Thanks, I will." And inwardly he thought: "A few flowers! A whole flower-shopful! Tomorrow, before breakfast. I'll go in a droshky." And he felt that life and he were on very good terms.

Just then a noise was heard outside, the door opened with a quick push and closed, and before the guests there stood in the

candlelight a short, thickset youth in a dark jacket suit—the young man from Switzerland. He glanced over the room with a threatening eye, went in an impetuous stride to the platform at the front of the alcove, and placed himself behind the plaster column—all with a certain violence, as though he wished to root himself there. He seized the top quire of the manuscript and began to read straightway.

He was perhaps eight-and-twenty years old, short-necked and ill-favoured. His close-cropped hair grew to a point very far down on the low and wrinkled brow. His face, beardless, heavy, and morose, displayed a nose like a bulldog's, large cheek-bones, sunken cheeks, and thick protruding lips, which seemed to form words clumsily, reluctantly, and as it were with a sort of flaccid contempt. The face was coarse and yet pale. He read too loudly, in a fierce voice which nevertheless had a suppressed tremolo and sometimes faltered for lack of breath. The hand that held the manuscript was broad and red and yet it shook. The youth displayed an odd and unpleasant mixture of brutality and weakness and the matter of his reading was in remarkable consonance with its manner.

The "Proclamations" consisted of sermons, parables, theses, laws, prophecies, and exhortations resembling orders of the day, following each other in a mingled style of psalter and revelation with an endless succession of technical phrases, military and strategic as well as philosophical and critical. A fevered and frightfully irritable ego here expanded itself, a self-isolated megalomaniac flooded the world with a hurricane of violent and threatening words. *Christus imperator maximus* was his name; he enrolled troops ready to die for the subjection of the globe; he sent out embassies, gave inexorable ultimata, exacted poverty and chastity, and with a sort of morbid enjoyment reiterated his roaring demand for unconditional obedience. Buddha, Alexander, Napoleon and Jesus—their names were mentioned as his humble forerunners, not worthy to unloose the laces of their spiritual lord.

The young man read for an hour; then panting he took a swallow from the beaker of red wine and began on fresh Proclamations. Beads of sweat stood on his low brow, his thick lips quivered, and in between the words he kept expelling the air through his nose with a short, snorting sound, an exhausted roar. The solitary

ego sang, raved, commanded. It would lose itself in confused pictures, go down in an eddy of logical error, to bob up again suddenly and startlingly in an entirely unexpected place. Blasphemies and hosannahs—a waft of incense and a reek of blood. In thunderings and slaughters the world was conquered and redeemed.

It would have been hard to estimate the effect of Daniel's Proclamations upon their hearers. Some with heads tipped far back looked up to the ceiling with a blank stare; others held their heads in their hands, bowed deep over their knees. The eyes of the priestess of Eros wore a strange veiled look whenever the word "chastity" was pronounced; and the kangaroo-philosopher now and then wrote something or other with his long crooked forefinger in the air. The novelist sought in vain for a comfortable position for his aching back. At ten o'clock he had a vision of a ham sandwich but manfully put it away.

Towards half past ten the young man was seen to be holding the last sheet of paper in his red, unsteady hand. This was his peroration. "Soldiers," he cried, his voice of thunder failing for very weakness, "I deliver to you for plundering—the world!" He stepped down from the platform, looked at everybody with a threatening glance, and went out of the door, as violently as he had come in.

His audience remained a moment motionless in the last position they had taken up. Then as with a common resolve they rose and departed, each one pressing Maria Josepha's hand with a low-toned word, as she stood once more, chaste and silent, at the door.

The dumb boy was still on duty outside. He lighted the guests into the cloak-room, helped them with their overcoats, and led them down the narrow stair, with the flickering light falling upon it from up there where Daniel's kingdom was; down to the outer door, which he unlocked. One after the other the guests issued into the dismal suburban street.

The rich woman's coupé stood before the house; the coachman on the box between the two clear-shining lanterns carried the hand with the whip in it to his hat. The novelist accompanied the rich woman to her carriage.

"How are you feeling?" he inquired.

"I don't like to talk about such things," she answered. "Perhaps

he really is a genius or something like that."

"Yes, after all, what is genius?" said he pensively. "In this Daniel all the conditions are present: the isolation, the freedom, the spiritual passion, the magnificent vision, the belief in his own power, yes, even the approximation to madness and crime. What is there lacking? Perhaps the human element? A little feeling, a little yearning, a little love? But of course that is just a rough hypothesis."

"Greet Sonia for me," said he, after she was seated, as she gave him her hand. He looked anxiously into her face to see how she would take his speaking simply of Sonia and not of "Fräulein Sonia" or "your daughter".

She esteemed his literary talent and so she suffered it, with a smile. "I will do so," said she.

"Thanks," said he, and a bewildering gust of hope swept over him. "Now I am as hungry as a wolf for my supper."

Yes, he and life were certainly on good terms!

FIORENZA

TIME: the afternoon of the 8th of April 1492

PLACE: the Villa Medicea, Careggi, near Florence

ACT ONE

The study of Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, a private apartment on the top floor of the villa. Tapestries on the walls; between them book-shelves are built in, sparsely filled with books and scrolls. Windows high up in the walls, with deep sills. Entrance centre back, covered by a tapestry. On the left a table with a heavy brocade cover; on it an ink-pot, pens, and paper. Before it an armchair with a high back. Down stage right a sofa decorated with the Medici arms; leaning against it a lute. On the right wall a large painting with a mythological subject. In front of it an étagère with ornaments.

1

On the sofa sits the young Cardinal Giovanni—seventeen years old, in red skull-cap and mantle with broad white turn-over collar. He has a charming, whimsical, effeminate face. On a chair beside him Angelo Poliziano, in a long, dark, flowing robe with full sleeves, finished at the neck with a narrow white collar. His shrewd, sensual face, framed in grey curls, with a powerful aquiline nose and a mouth with deep folds at the corners, is turned towards the Cardinal. The latter, being short-sighted, is using a lorgnon shaped like a pair of scissors. Books lie heaped on the carpet, some of them open. Poliziano holds a book in his hands.

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POLIZIANO: . . . and at this point, Giovanni, my friend and son of my great and beloved friend Lorenzo, I come back to the hope, the justifiable and well-founded wish which the whole wisdom-loving world, like myself, is looking to you to gratify. Do not think I forget the respect I owe to your lofty position in the hierarchy . . .

GIOVANNI: Pardon me, Messer Angelo! Have you not heard that Fra Girolamo said of late in the cathedral that in the spiritual hierarchy the Christian priesthood follows after the lowest of the angels? (*He giggles.*)

POLIZIANO: What? . . . Perhaps . . . yes, I may have heard it. But no matter. What I wish to make clear to you is this: that Christ's vicar on earth, whose tiara in the course of events you will very likely be called upon to wear, does nothing incompatible with his holy office in carrying out the plan I have in mind, which is that of all lovers of wisdom. You are aware, Giovanni, that I refer to the canonization of Plato. He is divine, thus it is but obeying the dictates of reason to make him a god. Star-gazers have read in the heavens that the performance of this reasonable and meritorious act has been reserved to the enlightened dynasty of the Medicis; not only so, but it is altogether a fitting and logical thing to do. And for Christ, He Himself doubtless could but sanction the canonization of the ancient philosopher. More than once did the Sibyls explicitly prophesy the coming of Christ; I do not need to remind my pupil of Virgil's pregnant lines. Plato himself, as we have on the best authority, spoke of it in no ambiguous terms; and we read in Porphyrius that the gods recognized the rare piety and religiosity of the Nazarene; they confirmed the fact of His immortality and were on the whole favourably disposed towards Him. . . . In short, my dear Giovanni, I pray that the gods will let me live to see the day which will bring to fulfilment my oft-expressed hope. That day will be the ultimate fruition of our Platonic studies together. (*He sees that the Cardinal is chuckling to himself.*) Might I ask what it is that amuses you?

GIOVANNI: Nothing, nothing. Messer Angelo—really nothing at all. I was only reminded of what Fra Girolamo said of late in the cathedral: "Plato's Symposium is marked by an indecent pseudo-morality." That is good, isn't it? (*Laughs.*) I find it a

shrewd observation. All the same . . .

POLIZIANO (*after a pause*): I am grieved, Giovanni, and I think justifiably. You are inattentive this afternoon, you were extremely inattentive all the time we were reading. I put it down to the unfavourable circumstances, and the care which sits heavy upon us all. Your glorious father is ill, and very ill, there are fears for his life. But we place our hopes on the costly medicine which the Jewish doctor from Pavia has administered to him; and, moreover, it seems to me that philosophy, in our hour of need, should be our loftiest and most grateful consolation. I might but too well understand it if the thought of your father should distract you from your studies. But since I am driven to realize that your mind is taken up with this absurd and fantastic mendicant friar, this Fra Girolamo—

GIOVANNI: Whose mind is not taken up with him? Forgive me, Messer Angelo! Do not be angry—look kindly at me; anger does not become you. Only the beautiful, the formal, the pellucid should be the subject of your talk. Do I love you or do I not? Who knows all your verses, and almost your whole vintage of Latin hexameters off by heart? Well, then! But this man from Ferrara—I should like to talk about him a little. You must agree that after all he is an original and arresting figure. He is the prior of a mendicant order and as such despicable. These orders are the object of general mirth and as often as I have been in Rome I have been told that they are nothing but an embarrassment to the Church. But when by reason of his own rare gifts one of these despised Frati not only overcomes the existing prejudice against his class but turns it into admiration for his person—

POLIZIANO: Admiration! Who admires him? Not I. Certainly not I. The rabble honours itself in his image.

GIOVANNI: No, no, no, Messer Angelo—he does not belong to the rabble. And not only because he comes of an old and highly respected Ferrarese family. I have heard him more than once in Santa Maria del Fiore and I assure you that he impressed me as a many-sided man. I grant you that he lacks culture and elegance to an astounding degree. But a close view shows that even so he must be constitutionally sensitive in both mind and body. Often in the pulpit he has to sit down, so shaken is he by his own passion—they say that he is so exhausted after every sermon that he has

to go to bed. His voice is marvellously soft, it is only his eyes and his gestures that sometimes make it seem like crashing thunder. I will even admit to you—when I am alone, sometimes, I take up my Venetian mirror and try to imitate the way he hurls his lightnings against the clergy. (*Imitating*) "But now I will stretch out My hand, saith the Lord; I will fall upon thee, thou adulterous, thou infamous, thou shameless Church! My sword shall fall upon thy favourites, upon the places of thy shame, thy palaces and thy harlots, and I will visit My justice upon thee. . . ." So it goes—but you see I cannot do it. I should be a poor hand at preaching repentance. Florence would laugh me to scorn, pert wench that she is! Even less—though I am a cardinal and shall come to be a pope—could I foretell events like him, who is but a begging friar, Messer Angelo. More than a year ago he prophesied the coming deaths of my father the Magnifico and of the Pope; may God forfend that this prophecy be fulfilled. But even now so much has come to pass that the jovial man who with such a pretty wit took the name of Innocent has been lying for weeks in a stupor so that the whole court has at times thought him dead; and my father is so ill that this morning they gave him the sacrament. Anyhow, that seems to have revived him; he was able to make a joke about it, although in a very feeble voice. But . . .

POLIZIANO: Your father overdid during carnival, that is all. There was great excess at the artist balls, and Lorenzo loves beauty and pleasure with such a burning love that he is too ready to forget considerations of health. He plies the cup of love and joy as though his body were as puissant as his wonderful soul. But it is not. . . . A child could foretell that some day he would have to learn his lesson—and you attribute a miracle to this monk of yours? Fie, Giovanni! Either you are a fool or you want to make one of me, which is more likely. You would tell me of his visions; how now and again he sees the heavens open, hears voices, and beholds the rain of fire, of swords and arrows. I am willing to believe that this good Brother believes in his own revelations, I will not laugh at their simplicity. But I hardly think that they would visit him if he were a little more educated and disciplined, if his gifts and his learning were not so hopelessly disorderly and muddled.

GIOVANNI: I am convinced of that, it is perfectly true. All of us are far too cultured and instructed to see visions; if we did have

them we would not believe in them. But he succeeds where we fail, Messer Angelo!

POLIZIANO: You cannot talk of success where only the rabble is won over, and that by flattering its miserable instincts. Otherwise Florence must blush indeed in the sight of all Italy at the success of this disgusting monk. I have been once in the Duomo when he preached, this much-admired Prior of San Marco—and, by all the Graces, Muses, and Nymphs, I will not go again! I have always flattered myself that I knew something about eloquence—but it seems I was mistaken. There was a time in Florence when a preacher was admired for his choice and measured use of gesture, word and phrase, his familiarity with the classic authors as displayed in apposite quotation; for his pregnant sayings, the clarity and elegance of his language, the masterly structure of his sentences, and for a voice of pure quality uttering harmonious cadences. But these it seems are all nothing. Real superiority is the achievement of a sickly boor with eyes like coals of fire, whose gestures are out of all compass, who sheds tears over the decay of chastity, cries down culture and the arts, vilifies the poets and philosophers, quotes exclusively from the Bible, as though the Latinity of that book were not execrable—and to cap all dares to inveigh against the life and the government of our great Lorenzo. *(He has risen and strides excitedly up and down the room, the Cardinal surveying him complacently through his lorgnon.)*

GIOVANNI: By the Holy Virgin, Messer Angelo, how splendidly wroth you are! You look at things with such conviction from a single point of view—Brother Girolamo himself could not improve upon your single-mindedness. Go on! I listen with the utmost enjoyment. Speak even more bitingly, more crushingly. “Epicureans and swine”—he spoke of “epicureans and swine”. The phrase is in everybody’s mouth. He referred to my father’s friends, to Ficino, to Messer Pulci, to the artists, presumably also to you. *(Laughs.)*

POLIZIANO: Hearken, my Lord Cardinal—

GIOVANNI: Now, now! What ails you? Do I love you or do I not? You are as right as you can be. . . .

POLIZIANO: I do not say that I am right, but I say that I despise this worm for imagining that he thinks he holds the truth in his hands. One little smile, ye gods! One single sly ironic word! One

subtle sceptical allusion to raise him above the masses and put him in touch with the cultured among his congregation ! Then I could forgive him all. But nothing, nothing, nothing of the kind. One dismal indiscriminate condemnation of unbelief, immorality, blasphemy, vice, luxury, and the lusts of the flesh—

GIOVANNI (*shaking with laughter*): *Vaccæ pingues*—oh, my Cod, did you hear what he said about the fat cows that graze on the hills of Samaria? He spoke of them when he was expounding Amos. "These fat cows," said he, "would you hear what they mean? They mean the courtesans, all the thousands and thousands of fat courtesans in Italy!" That is good—it is capital. Do not deny it. It takes imagination to think of a thing like that, it is a witty figure that sticks in the memory. *Vaccæ pingues*. I shall never see a fat cow again without thinking of a daughter of joy; no, nor a priestess of Venus without thinking of a fat cow. I will tell you a little discovery I have made. In wit, in the humorous point of view, lies the strongest antidote to fleshly desire. I am not a hang-dog, am I? I delight in statues, pictures, architecture, verse, music, and the jest and have no other wish than to live tranquilly in the enjoyment of these beautiful things; but I assure you that I not infrequently find the temptations of love an inconvenience. They destroy my balance, they cloud my happiness, they inflame me more than is agreeable. . . . Well, yesterday on the Piazza fat Penthesilea went past my litter, the one that lives by Porta San Gallo. I looked at her, and actually I did not feel the slightest temptation. I was simply seized with such a fit of laughter that I had to draw the curtains. She walked just like a fat cow that grazes on the hills of Samaria !

POLIZIANO (*indulgently*): What a child you are, Giovanni, you with your cows ! Donna Penthesilea is a very beautiful woman, versed in the arts and humanities, who does not at all deserve the comparison. But I rejoice to hear that you can see the funny side of your exhorter to penitence.

GIOVANNI: You are wrong there. I take him with all possible seriousness. One must. He is a famous man. Our beloved Florence knows well, I should say, how to annihilate with her wit people who being without talents are so foolhardy as to expose themselves. He has made her quake. At least one must grant that in religious matters he has great gifts and much experience.

POLIZIANO: Much experience! Splendid! When a man has no knowledge, then his inner experience, his inner light, make up for everything. He disowns the ancients, he will naught of Crassus or Hortensius or Cicero. He has not even the degree of Doctor of Theology and he disdains all the wisdom of the world. He knows, recognizes, and wants only himself, himself alone; he talks of himself whatever he may be speaking of—yes, sometimes he deals with episodes out of his private life and seeks to give them deep significance—as though anybody of any education or good taste could attach significance to what happened to this black bat of a begging monk. A few days ago at Antonio Miscomini the printer's I came across a copy of his pamphlet *On Love to Jesus Christ*—there have been absurdly enough, seven editions of it within a short time. Since our good Frate rejects the glorious dialogue of Plato, I was curious to see what he himself would have to say about love. What I read, my friend, was disgusting beyond all expectation. A perfervid and chaotic mixture of gloomy and fevered and drunken emotions, forebodings, and introspections which struggled in vain for clear expression. It made me reel, I felt actually nauseated. In all seriousness, I can well believe that this sort of study must be a wearing occupation. I understand his collapses and his fainting fits. Instead of running away from his honoured parents and taking refuge in a cloister, to sit between bare walls and stare into his own murky soul, this idiot ought to have submitted to teaching and sharpened his own perceptions of the colour and variety of the glorious material world. Then he would realize that work is not a castigation and martyrdom but a joyous thing, and that all that is good is blithely and easily accomplished. I wrote my drama *Orpheus* in a few days; and in face of the beauty of this world my songs flow from my lips as I drink, at the festal board—I do not need to go to bed after them.

GIOVANNI: Unless the wine were to blame! Yes, Messer Angelo, you are the light of the age. Who can equal you? Who sees the world so beauteous as you do? No one sings as sweetly as you. No one so sweetly sings the praises of a lovely boy. Perhaps Fra Girolamo has said to himself that an ambitious man must succeed by contrast if he wants to compete with you. . . .

POLIZIANO: Are you mocking me?

GIOVANNI: That I cannot tell. You ask too much. I never know

when I am mocking and when I am serious. . . . Who is there?

AN USHER (*lifting the portière at the entrance door*): The Prince of Mirandola.

GIOVANNI: Pico! Let him come in. Shall he not, Messer Angelo? He is welcome, is he not? (*The usher withdraws.*) Come hither, do not be angry—do I love you, or do I not? You are in the right. I own myself defeated. Brother Girolamo is a bat—there, are you content? One must argue a bit, eh? If you had taken his side I should have abused him with all my strength. Here is Pico. Good day, Pico!

POLIZIANO: If you were less charming, you rogue, one might be angry with you!

2

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola enters briskly, leaving his cloak in the hands of the page and coming gaily forward. He is an exuberant youth, elegantly and capriciously dressed in silken garments, with long, well-dressed blond locks, a delicate nose, a feminine mouth, and a double chin.

PICO: How is the Magnifico? Good day, Vannino! Greeting, Messer Angelo! . . . Whew! How hot I am! If you love me, signori, get me a lemonade, cold as the waters of the Cocytus. (*The Cardinal, making a sign to Politian to remain, goes obligingly to the door and gives the order in person.*) By Bacchus, my tongue is sticking to my teeth! What a warm April! The clock at San Stephano in Pane said three, and it is as hot as ever. You must know that I come from Florence, as fast as my horse would carry me. I dined at your kinsmen's the Tornabuonis, Giovanni, and I tarried there all too long. The Tornabuonis certainly set a good table. We had fat French capons, my lad, very tender-fleshed, you would have appreciated them. Yes, life has its charms. And Lorenzo—tell me the truth, how is he since this morning?

POLIZIANO: His condition seems unchanged since you saw him, my Lord. The Cardinal and I are waiting for the court physician's report on the effect of the draught of distilled precious stones which Sor Lazzaro from Pavia has administered. To beguile the heavy time we have been giving ourselves to our studies—from which, to be sure, we were distracted by an unworthy subject—

but we have had no fresh report from Messer Pierleoni. Ah, my gracious Lord, I am beginning to doubt the miraculous efficacy of this much-lauded draught. He who brewed it forsook Careggi at once—after receiving, by the by, a sinfully high fee, and left it to us to await the result of his ministrations. Would that they might be manifest! My great, my beloved Master! Did I save you, fourteen years ago in the cathedral, from the daggers of the Pazzi, that you might be torn from me by a malignant illness? Alas, wretch that I am, whither shall I turn if you join the shades? I am but a vine which twines itself about you, the laurel, and must pine away when you do. And Florence, what will become of her? She is your mistress. I see her fading in her widow's weeds—

PICO · Messer Angelo, I beseech you! This is a dirge and comes too soon. Lorenzo lives, the while you sing his death. Your genius carries you away. . . . Tell me, has Messer Pierleoni yet expressed himself decisively as to the nature of the illness?

POLIZIANO No, my Lord. He explains, in phrases which the lay mind finds hard to grasp, that the marrow of life is attacked by decay. A horrible thought!

PICO The marrow of life?

POLIZIANO And most frightful of all is the inward unrest which despite his weakness possesses the beloved patient. He refuses to remain in bed. To-day he has had himself carried in a litter into the garden, into the loggia of the Platonic Academy, into various rooms in the villa, and finds nowhere rest.

PICO Strange. Were you with your father to-day, Giovanni?

GIOVANNI No, Pico. And, between ourselves, being with him is become so hard for me that I avoid it all I can. Father is so changed. He has a way of looking at you—he rolls his eyes first upwards and then turns them aside, with an agonizing expression.

You do not know how frightful the proximity of illness and suffering is to me. I become ill myself. No, it was Father brought us up to brush calmly aside everything ugly, sad, or painful and to keep our souls receptive only to the beautiful and the joyous. It should not surprise him now—

PICO I understand. But you should seek to overcome your reluctance. . . . Where is your brother?

GIOVANNI: Piero? How should I know? Riding, fencing (in an effort to strike a lighter key again), perhaps with a fat cow—

FIorenza

PICO: With a—Ah, ha! Well, well, hark at little Giovanni! I shall tell my prior that the Cardinal de' Medici no longer quotes Aristotle but certain sermons. . . . (A servant brings the lemonade and goes out.) But now tell me, tell me! How did Lorenzo take this latest news?

POLIZIANO: Which news, my Lord?

PICO: Brother Girolamo's latest joke . . . the scandal in the cathedral.

GIOVANNI AND POLIZIANO: In the cathedral?

PICO: He doesn't know? Nor you either? So much the better. Then I can tell it to you. Let me drink and I will.—That is a beautiful spoon.

GIOVANNI: Let me see. Yes, it is charming. Ercole the goldsmith made it. Clever man.

PICO: Lovely, lovely! The golden balls—what delicate foliage! A very successful piece of work. Ercole? I'll give him an order. He has taste.

GIOVANNI: The scandal, Pico!

PICO: I'll tell you. In the first place, it is about *her*.

POLIZIANO: Ah, about *her*. . . .

GIOVANNI: Go on!

PICO: You know she attends the Frate's sermons?

POLIZIANO: I know—without comprehending why.

PICO: Oh, I comprehend it perfectly. In the first place it is the women who are his most passionate worshippers, and particularly women who have loved much are the most powerfully swayed by him—as is only natural. Besides, what do you want, our Brother has become the fashion. His success goes beyond all my expectations. And it is increasing steadily among the people as well as among the aristocracy; even the fat bourgeoisie is beginning to take notice. It is quite the fashion to attend his sermons—I find it rather fanatical of you, Messer Angelo, if you will forgive me, to keep aloof as you do. But to the point. The divine Fiore is less self-willed. She has lately been going with fair regularity to sit at the Frate's feet—which in itself would be a perfectly gratifying and even an exhilarating thing. The trouble is that she does it in such an ostentatious and challenging way. What she does is to appear in the cathedral nearly a half-hour too late, when the sermon is in full swing; and even that might pass, for, after all, she could do

it quietly and unobtrusively. But here comes in the fact that our divinity enjoys making itself felt and is even more given to the pomp and splendour of a regal progress than even her great lover Lorenzo himself; she shows much less restraint. A whole brilliantly dressed cortège surrounds her litter and accompanies her ladyship into the middle of the church to make a way for her through the crowd—which they do with no great tact. I was present the first time when she made her entrance, in the middle of the sermon. Her appearance would always attract attention—but in the manner of its doing it made quite a little commotion. The crowd pushed and shoved, whispered and pointed, the people who had just been bowing to the lash of the Frate's frightful prophecies twisted their necks round to enjoy the proud and revivifying spectacle of this famous, sumptuous, divinely beautiful woman as she advanced with her imperious air. As for the Frate, I was afraid, at the moment he saw her, he would lose his poise and the thread of his discourse. The word he had on his lips took so long to utter, it seemed to be frozen. He is always pale, but his face took on a waxen pallor, and never shall I forget the uncanny flicker of his eyes, in which a flame seemed to leap up, die down, and then blaze up again.

POLIZIANO: You tell the tale well, my lord—it is a veritable pleasure to listen to the harmonious flow of your periods.

PICO: By Hercules, Messer Angelo, in the present case what I have to tell is certainly rather more telling than the way it is told and I would pray you to fix your attention more upon the matter than upon the manner of the tale.

GIOVANNI: Matter, manner, tale, telling—bravo, Pico, bravo!

PICO: Hear me to the end. Since that day a silent, bitter struggle has gone on between the divine Fiore and Brother Girolamo. Her late appearance might seem the first time an aristocratic caprice, but she has persisted in it so obstinately as to make it obvious that she seeks to annoy the prior and his congregation. He on his side took various measures to counteract her late appearance. He spoke louder and more emphatically to drown out the noise her retainers made. He lowered his voice to a mysterious whisper to draw attention upon himself. He paused and let the condemnation of his silence speak for him until Donna Fiore reached her place and quiet was restored, when he resumed more violently than before.

The rest of us reap from the situation this advantage, that when she is there he outdoes himself. Terror and tears accompany his words; his audience quivers at the punishments he calls down upon Florence for her luxury and frivolity; after such a sermon people move about the streets half-dead and speechless. Often when he talks of the world's extremity and of pity and redemption the very scribe who takes down his words must break off in his task overcome by sobbing. The Frate has the art to touch the conscience with a single word uttered with such uncanny stress that the throng shudders as one man; it is very interesting to see this and at the same time feel the shuddering within one's proper breast. Naturally all this has made people attend the sermons in greater crowds than ever. . . . Our lovely mistress has not desisted from her provocative behaviour—and today things came to a climax, a catastrophe. Brother Girolamo has gone too far; I would not defend him. He was carried away by his own performance—listen to what happened. Even before dawn the cathedral was full of people who wanted to make sure of a good place. At sermon hour the crush inside and out was so great that a pin could not have fallen to the ground. At the very least, ten thousand people were present; those from outside of Florence have been reckoned at more than two thousand. From villas and from the countryside lords and peasants came by night not to miss the sermon hour—there were even people from Bologna. The crush between the Duomo and San Marco was frightful. The authorities had a hard time protecting the Prior from the demonstrations of the masses who wanted to kiss his hands and feet and cut pieces from his frock. In Via Larga, near your pala e, Giovanni, a woman shrieked out that she had been healed of an issue of blood by touching the prophet's hem. There was an outcry that a miracle had happened and the crowd screamed *Misericordia*. All the Fathers of San Marco, all the brotherhoods, and all the world besides were gathered in the Duomo. There were members of the Signoria and the red-caps of the College of Eight: men and women of every rank and age, boys clambering on the pillars, workmen, poets, philosophers. At last Brother Girolamo mounted the pulpit. His gaze, that strangely fixed and burning gaze, was directed upon the throng as he began to speak amid a breathless and oppressive stillness. He spoke to Florence, addressed her with the thou and in

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a frightfully slow, quiet voice questioned her how she spent her days and how her nights. In chastity, in fear of sensual lusts, in the spirit, in peace? He paused, awaiting an answer. And this Florence, this thousand-headed host, bends beneath his intolerable eye that sees through all, guesses all, knows all. "Thou answerest me not?" he says. . . . He draws up his sickly frame and cries out in a terrible voice: "Let me tell thee!" Then begins a pitiless reckoning, a Last Judgment in words, under which the crowd writhes as under the rod. In his mouth every weakness of the flesh becomes an intolerable, abominable sin. He names them all by name, ruthlessly, with dreadful emphasis: vices which till then have never been mentioned in holy places. And all are guilty, he declares: Pope, clergy, princes, humanists, poets, artists, and makers of feasts. He lifts his arms, and lo, a hideous vision, a devilish, alluring picture rises from the maw of revelation: the whore sitting upon many waters, the woman on the beast! She is arrayed in purple and scarlet colour and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. And upon her forehead was a name written, *Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots*. "That woman art thou, Florence, thou shameless wanton and strumpet! Very delicate art thou, arrayed in fine linen, painted and scented. Thy speech is wit and elegant euphony. Thy hand rejects any instrument that bears not the mark of beauty, thine eye rests voluptuously upon costly paintings and the statues of nude heathen gods. But the Lord hath spewed thee out of His mouth. Hark! Hearest thou not the voices in the air? Hearest thou not the wings of destruction? Yea, then, the time hath come. It is past. Remorse cometh too late. Judgment is at hand. I have prophesied it unto thee a hundred times, Florence, but in thy pleasures thou wouldest not hearken to the voice of the poor, wise monk. Gone are the days of dancing, of pageantry, of obscene songs. . . . Unhappy one, thou art lost. The frightful darkness falls. Thunder fills the air. The sword of the Most High flashes down. . . . Save thyself! Repent! Atone! . . . Too late! For the Lord looses His waters over the kingdoms of the earth. The flood carries away the masks and costumes of thy carnivals, thy books of Latin and Italian poesy, thine adornments and thy tirings, thy perfumes and thy veils, thy unchaste paintings, thy heathen statuary. Seest

thou the flames gleaming blood-red? Thou art overrun with savage armies. Famine stalks grinning through thy streets. The plague breathes over thee her stinking breath. . . . The end cometh, the end cometh! Thou shalt be rooted out, rooted out amid torments."

—No, my friends, I am giving no proper picture—my words cannot make you see his face, his gestures, cannot make you hear his voice, cannot bring you under the domination of his personal dæmon. The multitudes groaned as though on the rack. I saw bearded men spring up in a panic and take to flight. A desperate, long drawn wail for mercy was wrung from the centre of the crowd "Have pity!" And a deathly stillness . . . And then—his eyes grow dim. At the very moment of uttermost terror a miracle comes to pass. The annihilating wrath upon his countenance melts away. In overflowing love he stretches forth his arms. "The miracle of grace!" he cries "It comes to pass! Florence, my city, my people, let me announce it unto thee, grace is vouchsafed thee if thou dost penance if thou renouncest thy infamous revellings, if thou wilt dedicate thyself as a bride to the King of humility and suffering. Lo, He, He"—and he lifts the crucifix aloft—"He Florence, would he thy King. Wilt thou accept Him? Ye who are tortured by sin and marked for affliction, ye poor in spirit, ye who know naught of Cicero and naught of the philosophers ye who are cast down and rejected, ailing and wretched, He will lift you up, will comfort, refresh, and give you cheer. Did not our blessed Thomas Aquinas declare that the blessed in the heavenly kingdom will look down and see the sufferings of the damned that their bliss might be augmented? So shall it be. But the city which chooses Jesus as its King is blest already in this earthly life. No more shall some flourish while others dwell among beautiful furnishings set upon floors of mosaic. Jesus will have it and I as His vicar announce that the price of meat be reduced to a minimum, to a few soldi the pound. He wills that those who must pay a penance of five measures of meal to a cloister shall give it to the poor instead. He wills that the splendid gold vessels and the paintings in the churches be turned into money and the proceeds distributed among the people. He wills"—and just at that point, Giovanni, Messer Angelo, in that moment of universal emotion, contrition, abasement—just at that moment happened the thing which will give the Florentines food for talk for many a month to

come. There was a noise at the entrance, a clatter, a murmuring, a sound of feet, which echoed and increased. The slanting rays of light from the windows shone on steel, as the pike-bearers forced their way into the nave, crying to the startled crowd to make way. And into the path they opened stepped the divine Fiore with majestic tread, among her retinue. The great pearl which Lorenzo lately gave her gleamed like milk on her flawless brow. Her hands were folded before her, her eyes lowered, yet seeing all, her lips curved in an incomparable smile; she advanced slowly to her chosen position opposite the pulpit. But he, the Ferrarese, broke off his sentence abruptly, leaned his prophetic wrath far out over the pulpit, pointing down with arm outstretched straight into her face: "Behold!" he cried, "turn ye and behold! She comes, she is here, the harlot with whom kings have dallied on earth, the mother of abominations, the woman on the beast, the great Babylon!"

POLIZIANO: Terrible! The foul-mouthed wretch!

GIOVANNI: A little severe—but all's one.

PICO: No, no, do not judge, gentlemen! Since, unluckily for you, you were not present, do not try to form an idea of the tremendousness of that moment. Bear in mind that whatever he sees becomes truth and presentness when he utters it. His white hand stretching out of the dark sleeve of his habit trembled, as he gazed straight and fixedly into her face, and until he let it fall the exquisite Fiore was in very truth the apocalyptic woman, the great Babylon in all its shameless splendour. The crowd, torn to and fro by conflicting feelings, between damnation and grace, overwrought and on fire, made no doubt of it at all. Hatred, fear, and disgust spoke out of the thousand faces turned upon her. A hoarse groaning sound arose, it seemed to thirst for her blood. I too was looking at her and I swear to you, *in verbo Domini*, I felt my hair rise on my head and cold shivers run down my back.

POLIZIANO: You look for such shivers, admit it, my Lord!

GIOVANNI: And she? And she?

PICO: She stood for perhaps the space of an Ave Maria rooted to the spot. Then she drew herself up with a furious exclamation, motioned to her following, and left the church. Rumours flew about that she had ordered her people to murder him there in the pulpit, but no one dared to approach. It is said too that a secret

messenger went from her to San Marco after the sermon. Certainly his frenzy led him seriously astray. I am in no wise defending him. Whatever provocation she gave, it was not the way to treat such a woman. To curse her before all the people! Is she a courtesan, then?

GIOVANNI (with a giggle): Yes!

PICO: By the great Eros, she is the Magnifico's mistress. That is, I mean, it is not as though she were one of those who must wear the yellow veil and live in certain streets. A flawless woman! We know that, though born abroad, she is the natural seed of a noble Florentine family. But even did we not know this, her brilliant mind, her diverse gifts, her lofty humanistic culture would daily and hourly bear witness to her origins. Her terza rimas and sonnets are ravishing, her lute-playing has moved me to tears. She knows by heart countless beautiful verses from Virgil, Ovid, and Horace; and the grace with which she recited that very free story from the *Decamerone* the other day after luncheon, in the garden—I could have worshipped her for it! And if all this be not enough to assure her of universal admiration, she is the woman to whom our great Lorenzo's love belongs.

POLIZIANO: You have said it, my Lord. And I, is it I who must teach you to interpret in the light of this fact the events you have just described? Your penetration finds out so many things in heaven and on earth, you are the phoenix of the intellect, the savant of princes, the prince of savants—and you will not see what all this means? The latest atrocity of this Ferrarese is nothing else than a new act of hostility, a fresh piece of malice and impertinence against the Magnifico himself and his house. Our divine mistress has served the monk with no more contempt than he deserves; but the unbridled character of his revenge did not follow the blind dictates of rage, it seized with intent and forethoughtedly the occasion for one of his insidious attacks on the man at whose feet Florence has for two decades been lying transported, the man whom even with his own cowardly tongue he names "the Strong". You are a great man, who could rule a city and conduct a war, did you not prefer to lead the life of a free lover of wisdom; I am but a poor poet, possessing naught on earth but my burning love for the house of the Medici, source of light, of beauty, and of joy. But this love of mine bids me speak, bids me

snatch you back when in the rashness of youth you approach the snake lying hidden in the grass. The conspiracy of the Pazzi, when the beautiful Giuliano was slain in the cathedral and Lorenzo himself would have suffered the same fate had not some god given me strength at the last moment to close the door of the sacristy behind him—that conspiracy was child's-play beside the infernal machinations which—again in the same place, again in Santa Maria del Fiore—are on foot against the Medici and their blithe sway. The cheap successes which this viper has had from laying bare the meannesses of his character to the masses have simply turned his head. His zeal for human hearts, his craving to win souls for his own ends, is daily more and more undisguised. My Lord, do not fail to understand: his lowering face is set towards power! And what if it should fall into his hands? Open your eyes to what is happening and you will shiver with fright to see how shockingly the number swells of those who throng about this sorry despot and swallow the perverted and disingenuous mildness of his doctrine. These pitiful, self-denying, beauty-hating folk have been christened by more cheerful mortals with the nick-name "The Weepers"—as one calls the paid mourners at a funeral, you know. But in their self-abasement they have taken the name as an honour, and it now forms the style of a political party, opposed to the Medicis, whose head our monk reckons himself to be. But more: young sons from the first families of the city, a Gondi, a Salviati, brilliant and elegant youths, darlings of the gods like yourself, have crawled to this sorcerer's feet and applied for admission to San Marco as novices. The common folk are kept stirred up and baited with promises; it has gone so far that some good-for-nothings have stuck up lampoons in the form of sonnets against Piero de' Medici at the cathedral and the palace. Oh, my Lord, what did you do, what are you doing, calling this man to Florence and paving his way by your complaisance!

PICO: May we laugh at you a little, Messer Angelo, or will you take it amiss? If you could only see your own face! Go look at yourself in the glass! It looks as though you yourself belonged to the "Weepers", to that very political party of which you speak! Ha ha! Ye gods! A comic political party! So very important! I beg you to teach me the nature of our Florentines. I know them not, I have not studied them. They seem to me an uncommonly

tough and solid folk, and with passions one would best not stir up. No, no, forgive me but I cannot take all this so seriously. For so long as my observation holds, Piero has been unloved in Florence. His brusque and domineering way makes him unpopular here; but certainly it is a bit too much to suppose a connection between the lame sonnets against him and Fra Girolamo's sermons. If Andrea Gondi and little Salviati find it the height of good taste to don the cowl—do you want to prevent them? I confess that I myself have already toyed with the idea. I believe we are living in an age free from prejudice. Is it true that here in Florence I can dress myself as I like, and express my personality as strikingly as I choose without anybody pointing the finger? Yes, it is true, true figuratively as well as literally. And if I tired of sky-blue and purple and preferred the colourless sobriety of the monk's habit? Why did you not object to the famous Procession of the Dead, in which after so many high-coloured carnivals we had corpses rising from their coffins? The effect was that of a savoury after too much sweet. What did I do when I persuaded Lorenzo to send for Fra Girolamo to Florence? I made the city the present of a great man, by Zeus, and I am proud of it! Lorenzo, I am sure, would be first to thank me. Did he not lately send to Spoleto to ask that the body of Fra Lippo Lippi be sent to our cathedral, that yet another might be added to our tombs of illustrious dead? When Brother Girolamo is once a dead body, the Ferrarese and perhaps even the Romans will send us ambassadors to beg for his ashes. But we will not surrender them. All Italy will visit the grave of the much-talked-of monk and I shall be able to say that it was I first discovered and fostered his genius. Yes, my good sirs, I have won my game. I was far from certain of it—for who can measure Fiorenza's whims? In that Dominican chapter-house where I first saw him no one paid him much heed. I sat in a circle of scholars and savants taking part in the chapter; he held aloof, among his brethren, so long as the discussion turned on scholastic matters. But when the question of discipline came up he suddenly projected himself into it and astounded the whole chapter by the almost superhuman originality of his words and point of view. The state of the Church and of public morals all at once appeared in a glaring and malefic light; I was extraordinarily shaken by the glowing enthusiasm and fanatic narrow-mindedness of his dis-

course. And I was not alone. Several men of superior intellect and rank, even princes, wrote to him afterwards. But I sought his personal acquaintance and only strengthened thereby my first impression. Everywhere I went I sang his praises. But then I moved to Florence and became absorbed in the stimulating observation of this mobile, cultured, sharp-tongued people, this restless little community for ever seeking after new things. And in a happy hour I conceived the plan of making my influence felt to the point of having Brother Girolamo summoned hither. His reputation was established, my praise had run before him, he would have the chance to produce his effect. It was a bold attempt, it involved a certain risk. I said to myself: "This man, in this city, will either be drowned in laughter and spitted on the point of a thousand jests—or he will have the greatest success of the century." Sirs, it is the latter that has happened. I spoke with my friend the Magnifico; the Magnifico spoke with the Fathers of San Marco. Brother Girolamo was sent for. He began by instructing the novices. But in order to gratify the curiosity of certain privileged persons he was asked to admit them to the lessons. The audience increased daily, he made no protest—my faith, he certainly did not, for he was overwhelmed with requests to mount the pulpit; connoisseurs, elegant dames, everybody implored him. He resisted at first, then he gave way. The little Church of San Marco was full to overflowing, he preached to an audience overwhelmed. His name was in every mouth. Platonists and Aristotelians laid by their quarrel for the time to dispute over these standards of Christian ethics. The monastery church became presently too small for the throngs, and he moved over to Santa Maria del Fiore. At first it was the cultivated amateur who came; but now it is the lowly who are on fire, upon whose spirits he practises with his melancholy gift of prophecy, his profound judgment of life. The monks elected him prior; and San Marco, which was no better and no worse than than other cloisters, became a sanctuary of holiness. His writings are read with eagerness. He is the talk of the town. Next to Lorenzo de' Medici he is the most famous, the most talked-of, the greatest man in Florence. And all this I behold with the liveliest satisfaction, in which, good Messer Angelo, I mean not to allow your misgivings to disturb me.

POLIZIANO: They shall not, my gracious Lord. Florence knows

me too, I believe, as anything but an alarmist. Let us assume that it was merely envy whispering to me when I spoke—that I grudge you a pleasure I do not understand and cannot share. For I admit that I do not in the least grasp what is going on. Often have I given thanks to the gods that I was born in this time of dawning and new birth which seems to me as enchanting as the sunrise. The world wakes and smiles, she draws a full breath and opens her chalice to the light, she is like a flower new blossoming. All the dim, hollow-eyed spectres, the cruel and hateful prejudices which have haunted men for so long a night, melt away to nothing. Everything is born afresh. A boundless, alluring kingdom of new studies, long forgotten and undreamed-of, opens out. The labouring earth presents to us fortunate ones all the treasures of antique beauty. The individual is enlightened and set free to rejoice in his own personality. Great and ruthless deeds are crowned with glory. Art, innocent, nude, unfettered, paces through the land, and all that she touches is ennobled. All human beings are filled with the intoxication emanating from the divine; they follow their smiling leader and their jubilation makes a cult of beauty and life. And then—what happens? What next? A man, too ugly and rigid to join in the dance of the elements, embittered, churlish, full of ill will, rises to lodge a protest against our godlike state, and the poison of his zeal is such that the ranks of the joyous thin, the deserters crowd about him and behave as though what he says is something vastly new, something unheard-of. And what is it he says? What is it his whole being exhales? Morality! But morality is the oldest, the boresomest, the most exposed and exploded idea in the world. It is ridiculous. Or isn't it? Do you mean it isn't? Speak, my Lord—what is your answer?

PICO: Nothing. For the moment nothing, Messer Angelo. For I must savour in silence the after-taste of your exquisite words. Glorious, glorious, what you said of the times we live in! "Like a flower new blossoming." . . . I do beseech you to put it into verse. I wonder if the ottava . . . or perhaps the hexameters—

GIOVANNI: You must answer, PICO, or own yourself beaten.

PICO: Answer? Willingly. But it seems to me that I have already inquired whether we live in a time that is free from prejudice or whether we do not. And if we do, then shall we set limits to our freedom? Must our free thinking become a religion and lack of

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morals a species of fanaticism? I would repudiate the idea. If morality has been made impossible, if it has become ridiculous—well, then! Since in Florence the ridiculous is the greatest danger of all, then the bravest man is he who does not fear it. He would startle everybody. And in Florence to startle everybody is going far towards winning the game. Ah, my friends, sin has lost much of its charm since we got rid of our consciences! Look about you—everything is permissible, at least nothing is disgraceful. There is no atrocity that could make our hair stand on end. Today the place swarms with atheists and people who assert that Christ performed His miracles by the aid of the stars. But who has dared, this long time, to make any head against beauty or art? Am I blaspheming? Pray understand me. I am full of praise for those who devoted themselves to art when it was the possession of a few, and morality sat stolidly entrenched on her throne. But since beauty has been crying aloud in the streets the price of virtue has gone up. Let me whisper a little piece of news in your ear, Messer Angelo—morality is possible once more!

GIOVANNI (*who had been looking out of the window through his loggion*) Wait, Pico! I see some guests down there in the garden—you simply must sit all this to them.

PICO (*looking out*) Guests? Why, so there are. They are artists, a whole host of them. There is Aldobrandino—and Grifone—and the great Francesco Romano. Talk to them? Not to them, my dear Giovanni. It is not for them. But let us go down all the same. Come, Cardinal—and you too, singer of the glories of the house of the Medici. Let us enjoy ourselves with the brave lads.

POIZIANO You hear naught you will hear naught. But I see sinister things coming to pass.

ACT TWO

The garden. A view of the palace, behind which the open campagna, covered with cypresses, stone pines, and olive trees, melting into the grey green rolling horizon. A wide centre path, with smaller ones branching right and left, flanked by herma and potted plants, runs from the house to the front of the stage, where it opens into a rondel, with a fountain in a stone basin, where water

lilies float. Right and left front stand marble benches shaded by flat bowers of foliage like little canopies.

1

A group of eleven persons appear on the left-hand path and move forward, in lively conversation. They are the painter and sculptor Grifone, a fair man who walks with a bent, slouching gait—he wears a beard and has large bony hands; Francesco Romano, an impressive figure with a capacious forehead like a Roman portrait bronze, full, smiling mouth, and black, animal eyes which rove calmly from side to side; Ghino, blue-eyed, boyish, and sunshiny; Leone, with a round head like a fawn's, a powerful nose, little eyes set close together, and a satyr-beard through which one can see his curling lips; Aldobrandino, a noisy swaggering fellow with a red, smirking face; the embroiderer Andreuccio, a man already grey and with a gentle, feminine air; Guidantonio, the cabinet-maker; Ercole, the goldsmith; Simonetto, the architect; Pandolfo and Diono, of whom the one makes arabesque sculpture and the other portrait busts in wax. With the exception of Ghino, who is rather a dandy, they are negligently and comfortably dressed, with headgear of varying sorts, square, round, and peaked. As they come forward on the middle path they are discussing with some excitement, pushing each other out of the way, approaching their faces to each other, and gesticulating.

ALDOBRANDINO: We shall see, we shall see the face Lorenzo will make! I am his friend, I am justified in hoping that he will see me avenged.

GUIDANTONIO: If I were you I would not make so much noise about the beating you got.

ALDOBRANDINO: Nobody is talking about a beating, you numbskull. It was a buffeting.

GRIFONE: On my soul, you are right, there. The crowd gave you such a plenty of buffets that you could drive a donkey to Rome with them.

ALDOBRANDINO: Shall I pass them on to you, you funny man, you Jack-of-all-trades? They were buffets—and even had they been a beating they could not have shaken the honour of a man like me! The silly mob had been stirred up by that owl of a Fra

Girolamo, an ignoramus who knows as much about artistry as an ox does about playing the lute. What does he want anyhow? Can I paint the Madonna looking a ragged old woman as this prayer-mumbler demands? No, I must have colour, I must have brightness. And since the Holy Virgin will not do me the honour of sitting for me, I must be satisfied if a mortal maiden will serve my turn.

LEONE (*delighted*): "Serve his turn"—if a maiden will serve his turn —oh, you sly fellow!

AIDOBRANDINO: You are pleased to be very merry, my dear Leone. However, everybody knows that your pretty little Lauretta, who is sitting as your model for the Magdalena, promptly bore you a child. But you probably have some charm against beatings.

GRIFONE: Buffets, buffets! We do not speak of beatings.

LEONE: That is different. I did not take her to sit for the Magdalena and then abuse her for my own pleasure, I keep her for my pleasure and happen to be using her for a model. That is very different—the Madonna could take no exception to that.

AIDOBRANDINO: But Brother Girolamo can, you numbskull, and that's enough, in these days.

ERCOLI: Yes. God keep us, he is so strict, he would give Saint Dominic himself the strappado for nothing at all. He pretends to the people that like Moses he has spoken face to face with God, since then they listen abjectly to him, he can say anything he likes.

SIMONETTO: That is true. We saw today in the Duomo how horribly he sat in judgment upon Madonna Fiore.

DIONFO: Where is she? Does anyone know where she is?

PANDOLFO: She is with the Magnifico, telling him the whole story.

GUIDANTONIO: No, she cannot be in Careggi yet. Before we came away she was seen in the city.

AIDOBRANDINO: Messer Francesco, you stand there and say nothing, as your way is, smiling is usual too. But the world knows that your house is furnished in pagan style, like an ancient Roman's, and that your paintings are a different kind from the blessed Angelico's.

GRIFONE: You are furious because it was you who received the beating.

FIORENZA

ALDOBRANDINO: Oh, Grifone, not for nothing are you nicknamed Buffone, for you are indeed but a buffoon. You can do nothing but organize pageants and wait upon princes with your jests; and so you are annoyed with me because I am a clever painter. Sew ass's ears on your cap, fool! I go now to the Magnifico.

•ANDREUCCIO: No, wait, listen! Lorenzo is very ill; we may not crowd in on him as we used to, like carnival masks. When we came, I saw the Cardinal at the window. He made a sign as though he would come down. We ought to wait.

GHINO (*in a loud, clear voice*): Listen to me! We must go at the business all together. The guild of Florentine painters must lodge a protest against Brother Girolamo with the Council of Eight. And those of us who belong to Lorenzo's musical club must combine to demand that the Ferrarese's mouth be stopped.

ALDOBRANDINO: You may do as you like. But I shall appeal to Lauro alone. He is master, the priest is not. Those scoundrels who dared to lay their filthy hands on me - he will have their ears cut off, he will order them trussed up outside the palace. I am his best friend, he loves me, I came back from Rome expressly because he was ill. I came back from Rome in eight hours!

GRIFONE: What! In eight hours from Rome?

ALDOBRANDINO: Yes, in seven and a half.

GRIFONE: What, what? And Lauro's best friend? When is he supposed to have distinguished you thus? And did not I come back from Bologna and Rimini, where I have work at the court, on purpose because of his illness?

ALDOBRANDINO: Silence, buffoon! You hate me, I know, you are my deadly enemy, because you are from Pistoia, and our subject, whereas I am a Florentine and by birthright your overlord.

GRIFONE: What, what? My overlord? You are a braggart. A beaten braggart!

ALDOBRANDINO: Draw, draw, you empty-headed fool, draw the sword at your side and defend yourself or I will murder you with no more ado. I have been mortally insulted and am ready to commit a frightful deed.

ANDREUCCIO: Stop! Keep the peace! Look over there!

LFONE: By Venus! By the Mother of God! It is she—she comes!

GHINO (*rapturously*): Let us salute her! Let us all serve her!

2

A gilded and decorated litter, hung with lanterns and silken curtains, comes to a stop at the back of the stage. Fiore descends, casts a glance over her shoulder at the group of artists, and signs to the bearers to carry it away. She stands still for a moment, then comes slowly front, in the attitude Pico has described, with arms bent at right angles, hands folded before her, slender, straight, with her head back and her eyes cast down. She has a splendid and curiously artificial beauty. The impression she gives is of height, slenderness, symmetry, poise; she is almost masklike. Her hair is confined in a thin veil, from which it flows down upon her cheeks in blond, regular curls. The brows above her rather long eyes have been artificially removed or made invisible, so that the hairless part above the drooping lids seems drawn upwards with a searching expression. The skin of her face is taut and as it were polished, her delicately chiselled lips are closed in an ambiguous smile. About her long white throat is a fine gold chain. She wears a gown of stiff brocade, with tight, dark sleeves a little slashed. It is so cut as to make the abdomen prominent and is open at the breast to display the laces of her bodice.

THE ARTISTS (*pressing towards her with loud homage, some of them even kneeling and raising their arms in greeting*): Hail, Fiore! Hail to our divine mistress! Hail!

FIORE (*still without raising her eyes, with chill authority, so quietly that all grow still as she speaks*): You will lay aside your weapons.

ALDOBRANDINO: Yes, mistress! We will put them up--see, they are gone.

FIORE: You call yourselves artists?

GRIFONE: Madama, you know well that we are artists.

FIORE: But it seems you yourselves know it not, since you are capable of taking something very different so seriously. (*Pause.*) A light art, a childish art, that leaves untasked so much blood, so much virility.

FIORENZA

ALDOBRANDINO: Mistress, I have been mortally insulted.

FIORE (*scornfully and still very softly*): Oh, of course, then, if you were mortally insulted—

GHINO: You speak very strangely today, madama.

FIORE: Really? Do I confuse you? Do I confound your feeble brain, poor thing, poor little . . . Let me see, what is your name?

* GHINO (*offended*): You usually know me.

FIORE: It is true. You are Ghino, the amiable Ghino, the perfect cavalier, Ghino the dancer, who always smells so sweet. One hears that even your horse is scented when you ride out. And over there is Guidantonio, who makes the beautiful chairs. Look, and there is Leone. Good day, sir. I hope you had a delightful night. . . .

ALDOBRANDINO (*unable to keep still*): Madonna . . . you too have been mortally insulted today.

FIORE: I insulted? By whom?

ALDOBRANDINO: Dear and most beautiful lady—this friar. . . .

FIORE: What friar? A real story-book friar? Oh, I know. Did I not see you today in the cathedral? And you? And you? I went to amuse myself. You were quite a sight. I saw you go white up to your eyes.

ALDOBRANDINO: With anger, lady, with anger.

FIORE: Of course. You could not even compress your lips—you felt quite weak with the strength of your heroism. I saw.

ALDOBRANDINO: The villain! The Jew! The knave—who dared to slander you—

FIORE: Hark, what a fine flow of words! Before long you will equal your Frate himself, my stout Aldobrandino. Come, join in, you others! Do not lag behind. It will mightily relieve you to rave, for your wrath in the cathedral left you no strength for deeds.

ALDOBRANDINO: Deeds! By all the gods, madonna, you do ill to mock us. Just now before you came we were taking counsel how to put a stop to this abuse. But what can we do? Lorenzo loves us; but a word from you carries more weight than all our protestations. If you so willed, the doom of the Ferrarese would be sealed. They would cut off his tongue that slandered you, batter in his chest as he deserves—in short, they would kill him.

FIORE (*with a sudden outburst of violence*): Kill him, then!
(*With a swift movement she has drawn a stiletto from her bodice*)

and holds it out to Aldobrandino.) Do you see this dainty little weapon? Here at the tip the blade is a little brown. . . . Take it! The stain is from a powerful potion in which I have dipped it. One scratch is enough. Take it! Instead of standing there rolling your eyes. Take it. Ghino the *preux chevalier*! Or you, Guidantonio, maker of beautiful chairs! Or Francesco the Roman! You that look like a butcher of antiquity. He is only a feeble priest. . . .

ALDOBRANDINO: Madonna, we could not get to him. He stops in San Marco. And the people love him. . . . And he is guarded when he goes to the Duomo.

FIORE (*looking at him*): He is coming here.

THE ARTISTS (*together*): He is coming here? Who? Who?

FIORE: Brother Girolamo. Here. Today.

ALDOBRANDINO: Brother Girolamo . . . coming here?

FIORE (*puts away the dagger; in a changed voice*): I was jesting. I was having my joke with you. No, it is not true—a fantastic idea! Brother Girolamo—here!—Let me now take my leave of you.

ALDOBRANDINO (*still a little out of countenance*): You are going to Lorenzo?

FIORE: Lorenzo lies groaning in his bed. It goes very ill with the great Lorenzo. I feel like walking a little in the garden.

GHINO: And may we not enjoy the delights of your society?

FIORE: All praise to your courtesy. But even at the risk of seeming moody and unsocial in your eyes I would forgo the treasure of your company. (*She withdraws.*)

3

GHINO (*returning after having escorted her a little way*): She is magnificent, she is divine, she is marvellous beyond all belief!

GUIDANTONIO: Well, she was not too polite about getting rid of you.

GHINO: That is nothing. Nothing at all. One is in raptures, just seeing her.

ALDOBRANDINO: One is in raptures if she takes the smallest notice of one. And if she will not, one struggles even more to win just a single second of her attention, to lure from her one single smile, one nod of approval. If we watch ourselves we shall find

FIORENZA

that we think of her when we work. It is her beauty that moves us to create. . . .

THE OTHERS: Yes, yes!

ALDOBRANDINO: Ye gods, how happy must he be to whom she belongs, before whom she kneels, by whom she was subdued!

ERCOLE: Did you hear how strangely she spoke of Lorenzo?

• SIMONETTO: All that she said was strange to hear.

ANDREUCCIO: All that she said seemed to conceal something else.

LEONE: She asked me how I enjoyed last night. That was rather strong

ALDOBRANDINO: She may say anything. She says the most impudent things in so charming a way that it is like angels' music.

PANDOLFO: I did not know that she was armed.

DIONE: A dangerous mistress!

ALDOBRANDINO: She is a bold, mature, and independent woman. The weapon suits her gloriously.

ANDREUCCIO: Perhaps it was the very tool with which her father once threatened the Medici, when he was exiled, in Luca Pitti's time.

LEONE: I did not believe that story. I do not believe that she is the natural child of any exiled nobleman. When Zeus dethroned Chronos he robbed him of a member, an important one, and threw it in the sea. So strangely wed, the sea brought forth—our Lady.

GRIFONE: Not bad! In that case she would be a pretty age!

LEONE: Do you know how old she is? No one knows. If it is possible for her to age she conceals it well.

GHINO: That is true. They tell wonderful things about her beauty lotions and potions. They say she stays all day in the sun, to bleach her hair. They say that she even paints her teeth.

ALDOBRANDINO: Many people say that she uses magic. They tell it for a fact that she has bewitched Lorenzo, so that he is consuming himself with love of her. She boiled the navels of dead children in oil taken out of the sacramental lamps and gave them to him to eat.

GRIFONE: Rubbish—I don't believe any of that.

ALDOBRANDINO: You do not believe any further than the end of your nose, and you are proud of it! It is true, people are enlightened enough today not to take everything for gospel truth,

as they used to. But there is such a thing as going too far. I don't believe in transubstantiation—no, it is a ridiculous doctrine, and my cousin Pasquino, who is a priest, told me expressly that he does not believe it either. But that there are witches in Fiesole and many courtesans resort to magic arts to ensnare men are proven facts.

LEONE: Proven facts! All women are witches—I know it, I!

ALDOBRANDINO: Believe me, there are miracles in the world, and if I cared to tell—

GHINO: There is our worshipful Lord Cardinal.

4

Cardinal Giovanni, Pico della Mirandola, and Angelo Poliziano walk down the centre path from the palace. Poliziano has a peaked cloth cap on one side of his head, Pico a round head-covering turned up a little in the back. There are lively greetings; on the part of the artists a sort of intimate or ironically exaggerated respect. They group themselves easily on the seats at both sides and on the border of the fountain.

GIOVANNI: Greetings, gentlemen. We find you in weighty converse?

ALDOBRANDINO: Philosophic matters, questions of faith, revered sir. We were discussing the supernatural.

PICO: About which, I trust, your views accord with the teachings of Holy Church.

ALDOBRANDINO: Absolutely, illustrious sir! In all essentials, perfectly. I think I may call myself a pious man. I observe the usages of religion and always when I finish a painting I burn a candle. I was at the sermon in the cathedral today. But I got a sorry reward, my dear sirs, let me tell you that!

GIOVANNI: A sorry reward? How so, Aldobrandino?

ALDOBRANDINO: I will tell you, worshipful sir; I will tell you and your glorious father, for to that end I came hither. I have been mishandled.

POLIZIANO: Mishandled?

GUIDANTONIO: The populace beat him, before the cathedral, after the sermon.

POLIZIANG: After the sermon? (*Reproachfully, to Pico*) My good Lord!

PICO: They beat you, Aldobrandino mio? Come hither. Where have they struck you? Who has struck you? Tell me all.

ALDOBRANDINO: That will I, sir, and my own innocence will leap to the eye. Well, I was in the cathedral, where I had managed to get a small space to set my feet. It was frightfully hot in the press, I could scarce breathe and the sweat poured off me; but what will not one endure for the glory of God?

PICO: And to satisfy one's curiosity.

ALDOBRANDINO: Of course. I wept a good deal too, though I could not even see Brother Girolamo from where I was. But everyone was weeping and it was edifying to the last degree. I was most shocked at what occurred with Madonna Fiore; and I had scarce recovered from my surprise when I heard Brother Girolamo talking about art and pricked up my ears with a vengeance. His point of view is strange, it differs from mine in essentials. He said that it is wrong and wicked to paint the blessed Virgin in sumptuous robes of velvet, silk, and gold, for so he told us angrily, she wore the garments of the poor. Very good; but what if the garments of the poor have not the faintest interest for me? What then? I have the greatest respect for the Holy Virgin—may she pray for me, poor sinner, before the throne of God! Amen, amen! But when I am at work I am less concerned with her than I am that a certain green should look well next a certain red—you can understand that, my Lord!

PICO: Certainly I can, my Aldobrandino.

ALDOBRANDINO: But he maintains that it is vicious, and a mortal sin, to paint prostitutes and dissolute women and give them out as Madonnas and Saint Sebastians as we do today. He demands that it be punished by torture and death. Well, all Florence knows that I have just finished a Madonna for which a very beautiful girl sat to me, who lives with me for my pleasure. Laugh at me if I am boasting, sir, but it is a glorious painting. I wrote a sonnet about it when it was done, and while I worked upon it I constantly felt that a halo of light hovered about my head.

PICO (*gravely*): You are right, Aldobrandino, your Madonna is a masterpiece.

ALDOBRANDINO: Pico Mirandola, you are a great connoisseur,

I bend my knee before you. Good. Well, when the sermon was over and I was outside in the crowd that accompanied the father back to San Marco, some scoundrel looks me in the face and cries: "Here is one of those sons of Belial who paint the Madonna as a prostitute!" And at that the whole crowd turned against me in a brutish rage, struck at me with the peaks of their hoods, belaboured me with their elbows, almost trod me underfoot—I could not raise my arms, my whole body was tightly wedged in. I spat in the face of the man next me, but that was a poor defence. It is a miracle, I tell you, that I escaped with my life. God must desire me to make a few more things of beauty, since He saved me.

POLIZIANO: You see now, my Lord, to what we have come?

PICO: That I knew nothing, my Aldobrandino—that I could not come to your aid! For I cannot have been far off.

ALDOBRANDINO: Let me have my arms free, my Lord, and I need no saviour. I have a stout heart in my breast, as I have shown in more than one adventure. I have defended myself against three—it was yesterday it befell me, on my way from Rome, where I had commissions. You know that I hurried hither without stopping, on account of my patron's illness. Well, I was not far from Florence; already I could see in my mind's eye the gate of Saint Peter Gattolini. It was growing dark; I was on foot and alone. I was striding vigorously through the pass you know when two villainous-looking creatures, who had been hiding in the bushes, flung themselves upon my path, and as I turned I saw a third behind me. Do you understand what the game was? Three rogues tall as cypress trees, fearful to behold, armed to the teeth. They may have been bravoës hired by envious rivals, or common thieves with an eye on my money—in any case my situation was desperate. "Well," thought I, "if I must die, they shall not get my life for nothing!" I drew most nimbly, set my back to the wall of the defile, struck up a *Miserere* at the top of my lungs, and when the first one made a pass at me I dealt him such a blow on the head that the sparks flew out of his eyes and he sank lifeless to the ground. The others were seized with terror at my ferocity. They crossed their arms on their breasts and begged me of my mercy to let them go—which I did, in charity, as a Christian man. So they made themselves scarce, with the corpse of their accomplice, while I continued on my journey safe and sound.

FIORENZA

GRIFONE: Now, by all the angels, what a thumping lie!

ALDOBRANDINO: God send me my death with a plague of tumours—

PICO (coolly): Oh, are you there, Grifone? I overlooked you until now. Seems to me, though, you ought to be on your travels?

GRIFONE: So I have been, and in your service, my Lord. What a memory you have! I was on my travels. I got back only yesterday. I have been given honourable and important commissions. I have arranged a pageant for the Malatesta in honour of the name-day of his illustrious wife; also Messer Giovanni Bentivoglio found employment for my diverting talents. A witty and generous prince! He gave me a present of doubloons to sit at table and imitate all the dialects of Italy or assume the facial expression of various famous men. It is undeniable, my Lord, men like me must go a journeying to learn to set off their talents. In Florence there is already too much wit. But in Lombardy or the Romagna one can come into one's own.

PICO: I congratulate you. But tell me—you are a painter, are you not?

GRIFONE: Certainly, my Lord, that is my trade.

PICO: And it happens from time to time that you paint a picture?

GRIFONE: From time to time. Yes, my Lord, it happens. But not often, since I am active in so many fields. Lately I have been making violins, that is a job. But first and foremost I am a designer of carnivals, the organizing of festivals is my proper sphere of art. I have hurried hither to Florence because the May-day festival in Piazza Santa Trinità is close at hand. Good God, it is the eighth of April, high time to begin! Easter is not far off either; and I must think up something new for the next carnival.

PICO: But it seems to me carnival is just over.

GRIFONE: Yes, it was a little while ago. But my friends and I are racking our brains over the next one. The carnival procession, my Lord—Orpheus with his beasts, Cæsar with the seven virtues, Perseus and Andromeda, Bacchus and Ariadne, all that is stale as nuts. The crowd whistles and boos when we serve it up such stuff. And now, after our Procession of the Dead—truly I am at a loss.

PICO: Florence counts upon your creative energy. But I was talking with Aldobrandino, and you interrupted us. Retire, my

friend.—Aldobrandino, let us return to your affairs. If I understand you, you are come to complain to the Magnifico. . . .

ALDOBRANDINO: By my salvation, my Lord, that I am!

PICO: Do not, Aldobrandino, I implore you. You shall have satisfaction—or, rather, you bear your satisfaction within yourself. A man like you! So exceptional an artist knows that the esteem of all knowledgeable men is on his side. What do you care for the ephemeral hatred of the ignorant herd?

ALDOBRANDINO: Yours are glorious words, my Lord. I only—

PICO: But as for Lorenzo, he must on no account be disturbed. You know that he is ill—in what degree one dares not think, who loves him. It is essential to shield him from aught that might cloud or weaken his spirits. . . .

ALDOBRANDINO: If that is so, I gladly spare him, though it is ill to forget an injury which one has borne in silence. But the gods know that I love him in my heart above all men.

PICO: Well said, my Aldobrandino. You are a shrewd and industrious man. Keep your word and it shall bear fruit. . . .

POLIZIANO (*at some distance, to some other artists*): Truly, dear friends, we know nothing. We await the judgment of the doctor from Spoleto on the effect of the precious draught.

ANDREUCCIO: It is desirable that we should be able to spread good reports about the city. The people are restless.

GUIDANTONIO: Yes, they are in pessimistic mood. Evil signs have been seen.

GHINO: In the lion's cage at the palace one of the animals tore another to pieces. There are people who put a sinister interpretation on that.

ERCOLE: Some purport to have heard the saints sighing at times in the churches.

SIMONETTO: Many witness to it. And a fruit-seller in Piazza San Domenico swears that the Madonna in his shop has several times rolled her eyes.

ALDOBRANDINO: Quiet there, let me speak. All that is nothing compared to what I have seen. This morning when I was taking a walk outside the gates, it rained blood.

GRIFONE: Nonsense. It never rains blood. There is no blood in the clouds.

ALDOBRANDINO: My Lord Giovanni, will you instruct this

heretic that according to our holy religion such a thing is quite possible?

GIOVANNI: Possible or not, when my father is well again it will rain good Trebbiano, a liquid which for my part I greatly prefer.

ALDOBRANDINO: To blood. Aha, that is capital! Liquid! Trebbiano is a liquid, of course, but the joke is to call it one.

ANDREUCCIO: No, no, gentlemen, the thing is that the Padre prophesied the death of the Magnifico. That is what makes the people restless.

PANDOLFO: The scoundrel! He sings the same dirge in every sermon. And threatens war, starvation, and pestilence to boot.

ANDREUCCIO: He has a saturnine temper.

DIONE0: What rubbish! It is hatred speaks out of him, green-eyed envy.

ERCOLE: All the Ferrarese are avaricious and envious.

ANDREUCCIO: You cannot say that he is avaricious. He brought back poverty into San Marco and goes about in a worn-out habit.

LEONE: Do defend him, Brother Andreuccio the art-embroiderer. You are an old woman.

GUIDANTONIO: Easy to see he has made an impression on you. You belong to the Weepers, the bead-tellers, the head-hangers.

ANDREUCCIO: That I do not, certainly not, dear friends. But my mind is full of misgiving, and my heart is heavy. You know, gracious Prince, and you, Lord Cardinal, that I not only serve the arts with my hands, making beautiful embroideries and carpets, but also sometimes speak in public in favour of the manual arts and the beautifying of our whole life. Everything, it has seemed to me, must become art and good taste under the house of the Medici, my masters. And I still think so. But there is a thorn in my flesh. You see, not long ago I was speaking to a great concourse of people about the artistic progress that has been made in the production of gingerbread; for, as you know, we now make gingerbread in all sorts of charming and amusing shapes, after the modern ideas. Well, Brother Girolamo must have got wind of my dissertation, for when I attended one of his last sermons in the Duomo he came to speak of it and looked at me as he did so. He said that whoever tried to turn higher things into common things had no conception of their significance; that it is frivolous and childish to talk about making beautiful gingerbread when

thousands have not even the coarsest bread to eat to satisfy their hunger. The congregation sobbed and I hid my face. For his words are like whizzing arrows, my lords, they hit the mark! Since then I have been going about grieving and in doubt; for I know not whether my work and my activity were right all this time, or wrong.

POLIZIANO Shame, shame, Andreuccio! You have not the heart of an artist, else you would not give ear to this creature who daily calumniates art with his vulgar hatred.

ANDREUCCIO: Does he hate art? I do not know. He speaks lovingly of the work of the blessed Angelico. Believe me, his thoughts are on fire with inward fervour (*With an effort*) Suppose he has such reverence for art that he thinks it blasphemous to apply it to gingerbread?

ERCOLE: Whoever can understand that may! What I understand is that this loathsome mendicant friar would like to suppress all joy and light-heartedness in Florence. The feast of San Giovanni is to be abolished, the carnival—

GRIFONE What, what? The carnival?

ERCOLE: Yes, he wants to abolish it. You would have to look to it, Grifone, how to earn your bread, after that. You will have to start painting pictures.

GIOVANNI. Come, tell me more about him. I want to hear what else he says. He is a most extraordinary man.

GUIDANTONIO Well, I can assure your Eminence that the Friar uses some pretty strong language. He treats the Pope more scurvily than a Turk, and the Italian princes worse than heretics. He prophesies a speedy fall for you and your family, prophesies in a roundabout and uncanny way. He speaks of certain great wings which he will break. He speaks of the city of Babylon, the city of fools, which the Lord will destroy, but everybody knows that he means your father's house and his power. He describes precisely the architecture of this city—he says it is built of the twelve follies of the godless—

GRIFONE: Wait! What? Twelve follies? That would be something for my pageant. Listen! (*Pleased and excited, he draws aside another artist and begins to talk and gesticulate to him.*)

GHINO: I, your Eminence, have received the commission from the printer Antonio Miscomini to make woodcuts for the new

edition of the Frate's works.

POLIZIANO: What? And you have accepted the commission?

GHINO: Certainly.

PICO: He was right, I think, Messer Angelo. The dissertations on prayer, humility, and love of Jesus Christ are capital literary performances. And they will be enhanced by Ghino's pictures.

GHINO: That last was not Brother Girolamo's view, I may say. Imagine: he protested against the adornment of his works. He wanted no pictures. Did you ever hear the like? But Signor Miscomini was shrewd enough to insist that the book have a suitably elegant appearance. I ask you: who would read a book today that has no satisfaction for the eye and only contains the bare text? I have already finished some quite good things for it, I shall cut the Frate's seal in wood—

GIOVANNI: What is his seal?

GHINO: A Madonna, your Eminence, a Virgin with the letters F H on either side.

LEONE: Now I know why Lorenzo cannot endure Brother Girolamo. Or at least he has always done his best not to leave any virgins in Florence. *(They all burst out laughing.)*

GIOVANNI *(slapping his knee in his relish of the joke; then, quite touched)*: Come hither, Leone. That was very good. No Medici could resist it. Here, take this ducat, you long-nosed satyr. You may model me, if you wish. I like you well.

ALDOBRANDINO: That is all very fine, but after what has happened, Ghino, you must refuse the commission.

GHINO: Refuse it? A commission?

ALDOBRANDINO: Beyond any doubt. I have been insulted. In my person our whole craft is insulted, and the Frate incited to the insult. The devil can illustrate his books for him, but not one of us. You must decline.

GHINO: Not at all. Are you mad? What are you thinking of? I should refuse such a fat offer as that? Miscomini isn't stingy with his pay; he knows that he has made a tidy sum with the Frate's writings. They go everywhere. Everybody will see my woodcuts. I shall have much praise and get fresh orders. I need them, I must live. I have social obligations. And my little Ernelina wants presents, otherwise she goes with a shopkeeper behind my back. I have to bring her a silk cap, a horn of rouge and white lead if I

want her to be yielding to me. I need money; I take it where I can get it.

ALDOBRANDINO: Traitor! You have no honour in your whole body. I spit on you—I despise you from the bottom of my heart.

GHINO: Ridiculous! I am an artist. A free artist. I have no opinions. I adorn with my art what is given me to adorn and would as leave illustrate Boccaccio as our holy Thomas Aquinas. There are the books, they make their impression on me, I give out again what I have received, as best I can. As for views and judgments, I leave them to Fra Girolamo.

ANDREUCCIO (*broodingly*): But hard, hard it must be, a lofty and painful task that you commit to him. To have to deal with and judge of everything, of all life and morals—seems to me it needs great courage—and freedom.

POLIZIANO: Freedom, Andreuccio? Your mind is confused. Ghino calls himself free and he is right, for the creative man is free—he over whose birth Saturn presided will always be at odds with the world in whatever state he may have found it. But truly it is better to be able to make a chair or anything of beauty than to be born to set things right.

PICO: Well, I do not know. As a collector and amateur I prize things according to their rarity. In Florence there is a legion of brave fellows who can make beautiful chairs; but only one Brother Girolamo.

POLIZIANO: You are pleased to be witty, my Lord.

PICO: No, I am serious.—Who is that coming?

5

PIERLEONI (*comes hastily through the garden from the palace, beckoning as he comes. His long robe makes him take tiny steps. He is an eccentric old man, in clothing that suggests the charlatan and magic-worker. He wears a peaked cap and has a short ivory wand in his hand.*): Lord Angelo! Messer Politian! He is asking for you.

POLIZIANO: Lorenzo! I come!

PIERLEONI: He wants you to recite to him. He has thought of a passage in your Rusticus and would like to hear it from your lips.

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PICO: So he is awake, Messer Pierleoni? He is conscious?

PIERLEONI: He was, just a minute ago. But God knows if he will not have forgotten his wish and himself again by now.

POLIZIANO: And the draught? The healing draught of distilled precious stones? Did it help?

PIERLEONI: The draught? Very much. . . . I don't mean that it helped Lorenzo, exactly. Most likely the reverse. But the man who brewed it, Messer Lazzarro from Pavia, him it helped very much, it brought him in a fee of five hundred scudi.

(Giovanni giggles.)

PIERLEONI: You laugh, Lord Giovanni. You spirits are blithe. But I get red with anger when I think that this ignorant impostor from Pavia got away unpunished. Why was he called in? They did not ask me, they went over my head. He got a double handful of pearls and precious stones delivered to him out of the household treasury, among them diamonds of more than thirty-five carats; he certainly stuck half of them in his pocket, then he ground up the rest and dissolved them and gave our master the brew to drink, without even taking count of the position of the planets, for he has no knowledge of astral influences, whereas I never order a powder or apply a leech without carefully noting the position of the planets. . . .

PICO: You are a great and learned physician, Messer Pierleoni. We know that our illustrious master is well looked after in your hands. But now tell us, in trust us, remove us out of our uncertainty. What is the illness that has laid Lorenzo low? Give us its name. A name can be so consoling!

PIERLEONI: Mother of God, console us all! I can name you no name, my good Lord. This sickness is nameless, like our fears. If one give a name, it sounds short and dreadful.

PICO: You wrap yourself in silence, entrench yourself behind riddling words, and have done ever since the hour when my friend took to his bed. I insist on knowing: is there a secret here?

PIERLEONI (breaking down): The weightiest.

PICO: I will confess the suspicion which I have had long before today and which must overwhelm everybody who sees matters from close at hand. Lorenzo, like every strong man, has enemies.

PIERLEONI: He was never strong. He lived despite himself.

PICO: He lived like a god! His life was a triumph, an Olympian

feast. His life was a great flame blazing boldly and royally to the skies. And one fine day this flame dwindles, crackles, smokes, smoulders, threatens to die down. Between ourselves we have seen the like before; such surprises are not foreign to our time. We have heard of letters, of books, the confiding receiver of which read himself over into the kingdom of the shades without knowing it; of litters wherein one sat down a joyful man and descended pining and plague-stricken; of dishes in which the hand of some generous friend had mingled diamond-dust so that the eater got an indigestion for all eternity.

GIOVANNI: Very true. Very true. My father always took these things too lightly. One should taste no banquet in the house of a friend without taking at least one's own wine and cellarer along. Certainly no good host is annoyed at that. It is a well-established custom.

PICO: In short, Pierleoni, my friend, be open with us. Speak as a man among men. Are my fears justified? Plays poison a rôle in the affair?

PIERLEONI (*evasively*): Poison—that depends . . . that depends, my dear sir. Will you follow me, Messer Angelo? (*He bows and withdraws. Poliziano joins him; they move quickly down the garden.*)

6

PICO: Strange old man!

GIOVANNI: Things look bad. I am afraid, I feel sad. If my father only did not roll his eyes so strangely . . .

ALDOBRANDINO: Do not grieve, your Eminence, dear Lord Giovanni. If the illness is strange, so also shall be the cure. There are extraordinary cures. Just listen what once happened to me. It will distract you. I am often ill, as sensitive people always are; but once, some years ago, I was mortally so. The trouble was in my nose, a gnawing pain inside that noble organ. No doctor knew what to do. All internal and external means had been sought in vain. I have even used the excrement of wolves with powdered cinnamon dissolved in the slime of snails and I was completely exhausted from blood-letting. But the air passages were closing and I thought there was nothing for it but I must suffocate. Then in my hour of need my friends took me to a master of the secret

sciences, Eratosthenes of Syracuse, a marvellously skilled necromancer, alchemist, and healer. He examined me, spoke not a word, put five different kinds of powder in a pan and lighted them. He said an incantation over them and left me alone in his laboratory. Then there arose so frightful and irritating a smoke that I completely lost my breath and thought I should die upon the spot. I summoned my last ounce of strength to reach the door and escape. But when I stood up I was taken with such an immoderate sneezing as I have never had in all my life before, and as I shook and quivered from head to foot, there came out of my nose an animal, a polyp or a worm, as long as my middle finger, very ugly, hairy, striped, all slippery, with suckers and pincers. But my nose was free, I breathed in air and realized that I was entirely cured.

PICO (*looking down the garden to the right*): Listen, Vannino, I must leave you. I see your brother Piero. You know I do not love his ways. Let me avoid him. I will see if they will let me in to your father. Farewell, we shall see each other soon. Good day, my lords. (*He goes.*)

GIOVANNI: Well, and the worm, the polyp, Aldobrandino? Did you catch it?

ALDOBRANDINO: No, it got away. It ran into a crack in the floor.

GIOVANNI: Too bad. You could have tamed it and taught it to do tricks, perhaps.

7

PIERO DE' MEDICI (*comes with a proud, imperious gait along the right-hand side path. He is a tall, strong, supple youth of one-and-twenty years, with a smooth, well-proportioned, arrogant face and brown curls, falling thick and soft at the nape of his neck. He is armed with dagger and sword, and wears a velvet cap with an agiaffe and plume, and a tight blue silk doublet fastened in front with quantities of little buttons. His bearing is offensive, his speech loud and commanding, his whole personality uncontrolled and violent.*): Giovanni! Where are you? I am looking for you!

GIOVANNI: And lo, you have found me out, Piero. What is the good news?

PIERO: You have company . . . have you been here long?

GRIFONE: About an hour, your Excellency, or thereabouts.

PIERO: Then it seems to me that at the moment you are not needed further. If you should wish to take leave you will not be hindered. (*Stamping with his foot*) You are invited to go to the devil!

ERCOLE: Your Eminence, we crave your permission.

GIOVANNI: God be with you, dear friends; do not go far off. I am convinced my father will ask for you. Farewell, Aldobrandino . . . Grifone . . . Francesco. . . (*He accompanies them as they go, then returning*) You do wrong, Piero, to treat such distinguished men as you did.

PIERO: I should not know how otherwise to treat buffoons and suchlike of the artist tribe.

GIOVANNI: Yes, you see, that is wrong. In every artist, it may be, there is something of the fool and the vagabond, but that is not all of him, for each is after all something of a leader who directs the taste of the many into fresh channels and, so to speak, puts in currency new coinage of pleasure.

PIERO: Glorious leaders, forsooth! This Aldobrandino —

GIOVANNI: Yes, yes, this Aldobrandino. I admit that I like best the society of his sort. The humanists are tedious and irreligious, and the poets for the most part pathetic and conceited; the artist is my man. They are cultured without being tiresome. They dress well and they have wit, originality, and a sense of fitness. And what mobility, what lively fantasy! Messer Pulci has no more, I declare. Before you can say a rosary this Aldobrandino can kill you three giants, make it rain blood and blow monsters out of his nose, without entertaining a single doubt of the truth of his boasts.

PIERO: You are welcome to all the pleasure you get out of it. But I must speak to you alone and so I made bold to send your friends packing.

GIOVANNI: You want to speak to me? I have no money, Piero!

PIERO: Don't lie! You always have money.

GIOVANNI: By the blood of Christ, I have had large expenses—for musical instruments and for a dwarf Moor, the quaintest creature on the face of the earth. Should you like to see him? Come, I will show him to you. Why stand here and talk of money—

PIERO: I need some. You must lend me for a little while.

GIOVANNI: I can't, Piero. Certainly not. The little I have I must keep together.

PIERO: Your Highness is probably saving up for the Conclave? But it is not your turn yet, most illustrious prince of the Church. You cannot vie with Roderigo Borgia. They say he sends asses laden with gold to those cardinals whom he has not yet poisoned, to attune the Holy Ghost in his favour. Your Eminence will have to have patience.

GIOVANNI: What are you talking about, Piero? Of course I shall have patience. I am hardly seventeen. But the growth of simony is a very interesting subject, which I should like to discuss with you.

PIERO: Well, I need a hundred ducats, to buy a horse to ride at our next tourney, the second day of Easter week--

GIOVANNI: A hundred ducats! You are stupid. A horse--when you have so many horses! And your silly tourneys! How you can be so mad about them! Running at each other and getting hurt--no sense in that. Did you ever read that Cæsar or Scipio rode tourneys? Such a dangerous passion! Petrarch--

PIERO: A fig for your Petrarch! I would not take advice about a knightly and elegant career from a sonnet-tinker like that. The times are past when the princes of Italy and Europe considered us shopkeepers and money-changers; they were past when we learned to wear armour and bear a lance. Our court shall lag behind none other in Europe--and what is a court without tourneys? Anyhow, will you advance me the hundred ducats or not?

GIOVANNI: No, Piero, certainly not. It's no good. Don't be angry, but giving you money is like pouring into the cask of the Danaïds. You squander it all with your boon companions and your fat cows--

PIERO: What--fat cows?

GIOVANNI: A phrase all Florence knows. You do not seem to be informed about the latest witticisms. And besides, you are so far in the hands of usurers that you do not spend a florin without it costing you eight lire. Where will that end, I should like to know? The times are bad enough, anyhow. The sparrows on the house-tops know that our house has been going to the dogs since Grandfather died. They say that our banks in Lyons and Bruges are shaky. People are whispering that the bank of deposit for the dowries of burghers' daughters has had to limit its payments because Father spent a lot of the money for works of art and

festivals. Many people have taken that amiss.

PIERO: Taken it amiss! Who dares grumble? The factions are scattered, the refractory have been consigned to exile or a dungeon. We are masters. Today it is Lorenzo, tomorrow or day after it is myself. Then, trust me, there will be an end of small shop-keeping. If the banks crash, let them. I'll give them a kick to finish them. The important thing is landownership. We must get more and more property. We are princes. Charles of France called my father his favourite cousin—he must call me his brother! Just let me be master once! Not a law shall be left that gives the people the shadow of a right or even seems to set limits to our will. We will have no nobility near the throne. There will be confiscations, condemnations. Lorenzo has never gone about this matter firmly enough. He has been too poor-spirited to give our position the title it deserves. I do not care to be the first citizen of Florence; duke and king is what they shall call me throughout Tuscany.

GIOVANNI: Ah, your Grace, your Majesty!—You are a braggart. Is that all your political theory you are showing off? Are you so sure that Madonna Fiorenza will take you for her lord and lover, when our father—which may God forbid—is dead? You have a wonderful understanding of physical exercise and affairs of gallantry; but your knowledge of public matters is to seek. Did you know that Brother Girolamo preaches against you? That the people cannot stand you? That they stick up lampoons against you on the palace?

PIERO: Listen, my lad, I advise you not to make me angry. Give me the hundred ducats I need and keep your political dissertations to yourself.

GIOVANNI: No, Piero. I gladly give you my blessing; receive it, dear brother, I pray you. But I lend you no more money. *Finis*, signed and sealed.

PIERO: You mule! You Sodomite! Sanctified son of a pig! What prevents me from boxing your ears, you purple ape!

GIOVANNI: Nothing prevents you, you are quite vulgar and ungente enough. So I will go away and withdraw myself from the vicinity of your bad manners. You will find me with our father if you should be looking for me to beg my pardon. Farewell. *(He goes off up the centre path.)*

PIERO: Go, go, you weakling! Red hat on your head, wet

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swaddling-clouts on your breech ! I do not need you. Soon I shall be master; then the rejoicing world will see a prince to make its teeth chatter ! Wagons . . . wagons . . . towers on wheels . . . a swaying, shimmering purple progress in the dust, between carpets, under awnings, through the heart of the yelling mob ! Youths poisoning lances, on prancing, whinnying steeds . . . flying genii strewing roses . . . Scipio, Hannibal, the Olympian gods descending to pay homage, rolling up to the triumph of Piero the divine ! . . . And on a gilded car high as a house—I, I ! The orb of the earth revolving at my feet, Cæsar's laurel wreath on my brow, and in my arms she . . . my creature, my handmaid, my blissfully blushing slave . . . Fiorenza. . . Ah ! . . . You are there, madonna ?

8

Fiore has appeared on the right-hand path and now stands in the centre one her hands folded on her advanced abdomen, her head thrown back, and her eyes cast down, calmly symmetrical, in mute and mysterious loveliness.

PIERO (going up to her): Is it you, madonna ?

FIORÉ: You behold me in the flesh, noble sir.

PIERO: I was unaware of your nearness. I was busy with my thoughts.

FIORÉ: Thoughts ?

PIERO: Still I will say that I am glad, that I am inexpressibly rejoiced, to meet you.

FIORÉ: I beg you, spare me. I am a woman, and such words in the mouth of the glorious Piero must abash any woman. . . .

PIERO: Most gracious Fiore ! Ravishing Anadyomene !

FIORÉ: Audacious flatterer ! The Grand Turk sent us some of his sweets, and when I ate of them after the meal I thought there was nothing sweeter on earth. I think so no more, now I have heard your words.

PIERO: Sweet simpleton ! Come, we shall chat, you and I. . . . What would I say ? . . . It grows cool. . . . You have been walking in the garden, lovely Fiore ?

FIORÉ: Your keen perceptions have told you as much. I walked between the hedgerows. And gazed sometimes out into the

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country, to see if guests were coming from the town, one guest perhaps, to bring a little diversion to the villa. . . .

PIERO: Yes, yes . . . I quite understand your longing for variety, beautiful lady! Nothing more fatiguing than a country sojourn, since Lorenzo got the bad idea of stopping in bed. Just between us, I am surprised that you have not sooner thought of having a change.

FIORE: What do you mean, my Lord?

PIERO: I mean—I mean, sweet Fiore, that you would not have far to seek to find people downright willing to take over the sweet duties of which my father has seemed now for a while no longer capable. Your beauty blooms untasted, your mouth, your bosom orphaned. . . . Be assured, not you alone are vexed. Look up and see a man who yearns immoderately to be in every way of service to you.

FIORE: Forgive me, the sight is not novel enough to lure my gaze from the ground. All long for me; do you say it of yourself in hope to win me?

PIERO: In hope? Am I a boy? Am I a tyro in the lists of love? I would and shall possess thee, divine creature. . . .

FIORE (*slowly lifting her eyes and looking with inexpressibly languid contempt into his face*): If you knew how you weary me!

PIERO: What are you saying? In my arms you would forget your weariness.

FIORE (*repulsing him scornfully*): I will not belong to you, Piero de' Medici!

PIERO: Not to me? Why not? I am strong, you would have naught to complain of. I control the wildest stallion with my thighs, needing no saddle nor bridle. I have challenged the best players in Italy to wrestling, to ball, to boxing, and you have seen that I was victor. If you will lie with me, sweet Fiore, I will tell you of my triumphs in the gymnasias of Eros.

FIORE: I will not belong to you, Piero de' Medici.

PIERO: Hell and Hades, does that mean that you scorn me?

FIORE: It means that you bore me inexpressibly.

PIERO: Hearken, madama, I speak to you as to a lady whose charm and culture one considers, but I am not minded to whimper after your love as though you were a bashful and dutiful burgher's wife. If you would play the prude, it will but sweeten my

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love; but I beg you not to ask me to take your cruelty to heart. Who are you, to give yourself the air of repelling my advances? You are of noble Florentine blood, but your father begot you without priestly blessing and died in exile as a reward for his bargain with Luca Pitti. You live and confer your favours in the service of Aphrodite; and Lorenzo conceived you as a partner of his pleasures when they were feasting him in Ferrara. You need not doubt that Piero will know how to reward you for your caresses as richly as Lorenzo.

FIORÉ: I will not belong to you, Piero de' Medici.

PIERRO (*furiously*): To whom, then? To whom? You have another lover already you shameless courtesan?

FIORÉ: I will not belong to you, Piero de' Medici.

PIERRO: To a hero? I am a hero! Italy knows it.

FIORÉ: You are no hero; you are only strong. And you bore me.

PIERRO: Only strong? Only strong? And is not the strong man a hero?

FIORÉ: No. He who is weak, but of so glowing a spirit that even so he wears the garland—he is a hero.

PIERRO: You gave yourself to my father—is he a hero?

FIORÉ: He is one. But another has arisen, to tear the garland from him.

PIERRO: You? You? I will have you. Who is he, who is he, the weakling with the glowing soul, that I may flout him, and choke him with two of my fingers?

FIORÉ: He is coming. I have seen to it that he should come. They shall confront each other. But as for you—withdraw, when heroes quarrel!

PIERRO (*raging*): I will have you, I will have you, sweet insolence, flower of all the world—

FIORÉ: You will not have me. You bore me. Make way, that I may go and await your father's rival.

ACT THREE

A room adjoining the sleeping-chamber of the Magnifico. In the background, left, between heavy half-open portières, a view of the bedchamber; steps occupy the rest of the rear of the stage, leading up to a gallery. Centre left a splendid marble chimney-

piece with a relief supported by columns, and the Medici arms. In front of it chairs. Left front an *étagère* with antique vases. Right front a door hung with a gold-embroidered tapestry. Right back a curtained window. Between door and windows, drawn a little forward, a bust of Julius Cæsar on a pedestal. Smaller busts, without pedestals, on the chimney-piece and above the doors. Slender columns are let into the walls. The subdued light of the late afternoon sun filters through the window curtain.

1

Lorenzo de' Medici sits in a high-backed arm-chair in front of the fire, asleep, with his head on his chest, a cushion at his back, and a rug over his knees. He is ugly; with a yellowish-olive complexion and a sinister expression due to the wrinkles in his brow. He has a broad, flat face with a flattened nose and a large projecting mouth with flabby wrinkles round it. His cheeks are marked from nose to fleshless chin by two deep slack furrows; these are the more prominent because he cannot breathe through his nose but must keep his mouth open. Yet his eyes as he awakes are clear and full of fire despite his weakness and seem to seize upon men and things with vigour and avidity. His lofty and speaking brow triumphs over the rest of his facial ugliness; his motions are the perfection of aristocracy. Sometimes a charming expression of fascinatingly innocent merriment comes out upon his ravaged features, seeming to purify them entirely and give them a childlike look. He wears a voluminous fur-bordered garment like a dressing-gown, closed high round his short neck. His hair is brown, with white threads; it is parted in the middle and waves against his cheek and neck. He speaks with studied clarity, in a nasal voice.—Watching his uneasy sleep are Pico della Mirandola, Poliziano, Pierleoni, Marsilio Ficino, and Luigi Pulci. Old Ficino has the worn face of a scholar, a withered neck, and scant white locks coming out beneath his pointed cap; he wears the usual voluminous garment closed to the throat and sits in the centre of the room, surrounded by the others. Pulci, a comic type, with little red-rimmed eyes and inflamed pockets beneath them, a pointed nose, prominent ears, and a mole on his cheek, is pressing his finger to his lips as he gazes with the others into Lorenzo's face.

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PIERLEONI (*going cautiously up to the invalid and feeling his pulse*): It is very irregular. I am considering whether this is not the time to bleed him once more.

PICO: You will kill him with your blood-lettings. It is not twelve hours since you took a basinful from him.

PIERLEONI: The man does not need a tenth of the blood he carries round with him.

POLIZIANO: Where is his spirit? It seems to move upon strange paths far from ours. I would gladly hear your opinion of its experiences, dear Marsilius.

FICINO: It is likely that at this hour contact with the divine unity is established in his brain.

PULCI (*lowering his strident and comically cracked voice*): Look, look, all that is mirrored upon his countenance! I wager that he is dreaming the most extraordinary things. If he feels no pain, then I envy him. The fever causes the strangest fancies, far better than are produced by strong wine. Sometimes one may dream in verse, but is prone to forget it.

PIERLEONI: This sleep is not the sort that feeds the natural resources of the man. If his faintness continue, then I must hold the little fingers and toes of His Magnificence while I anoint his heart and his pulse with the oil which I have ready here.

PICO: Hush! He is stirring, he wakes.

PULCI: He will tell us of his adventures.

FICINO: Do you know us, Laurentius, my dear pupil?

LORENZO: Water. . . (*They give him to drink.*)

LORENZO: The water-seller had a skull. . .

POLIZIANO: What water-seller, my Lauro?

LORENZO: Angelo . . . is it you? Good, good, I will control myself. Shall not one master this madness? I met a water-seller with his laden ass and full jugs; but when he put a wooden goblet to my parched lips there was fire in it and on the villain's shoulders sat a grinning death's-head.

PULCI: Well, that is a modest invention.

LORENZO (*recognizing him*): Good day, Morgante. Are you there, old good-for-nothing? And my Pico with the ambrosial locks? And even great Marsilius, wooer and messenger between me and wisdom—you are all with me, friends. The frightful old man was only in my own blood.

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PULCI: A frightful old man?

LORENZO: Rubbish! Worthless rubbish! I dreamed so hard of a bald-headed old man who wanted me to ride in his rotten bark...

POLIZIANO (*shaken*): Charon?

LORENZO: I was asleep. . . . What time is it?

PICO: You slept about an hour. It is three o'clock. The sun has begun to set.

LORENZO: Already? (*Scized by sudden unrest*) Listen, my friends, I should like my carrying-chair. The air here is stifling. . . . Carry me . . . carry me into the loggia; take me up on the battlements. . . .

PIERLEONI: Dear and gracious Lord, that would be folly. You need rest.

LORENZO: Rest? I cannot rest. Why can I not rest, doctor? Why do I feel that I must strain myself to think and arrange manifold matters before it is too late?

PIERLEONI: You have a little fever, my Lord.

LORENZO: I do not deny it. But I would say that the fever is no ground for my being tortured by these ridiculous fears. You see, I think logically. But I do not conceal that I am heavy with cares. I have never pretended—Pico, there are no more Pazzi in Florence, are there? And the Nicconi Diotisalvi are either in exile or put safely away?

PULCI: Save those you sent to hear the grass grow!

LORENZO: Yes, come here, Margutte! Make jokes, you wild rhapsodist! Yes, in truth, much blood has flowed. It had to.—I implore you, Pico, for the time I am not able, to keep an eye on the collections in Via Larga and the villas. You will do it for me? A couple of lovely little trifles, two terracottas and a medallion, have just been acquired; they must be kept in Poggio a Cajano, you know, my dear fellow? And the Sforza has presented me with a glorious antique from Pesaro, an Ares with breastplate. It should be set up in my public garden and serve the young sculptors as a model. Will you see to it? Thanks. That is all that was troubling me.—Is Angelo here still?

POLIZIANO: Here, my Lauro.

LORENZO: Angelo, the Pliny which my grandfather got from a cloister in Lübeck is in the Signoria, is it not? I should like to

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see it. It is bound in red velvet with silver mountings. Let a responsible person go at once—no, wait. That seems to me less important than something else on my mind. Wait. One of my searchers has been offered a Cato manuscript for five hundred gulden. I am in doubt over the genuineness of the script. There are cases where some rascal has made up something out of his own head and put it on the market under an ancient name. I beg you to test the manuscript very carefully and if it be genuine procure it for me without bargaining. They must not say that I let a Cato escape me. May I burden you with this? You lift a load from my heart. Come, my friends, now I feel easier. I can think of nothing to depress me. Let us talk. Let us discuss. Who was greater, *Mirandola*, *Cæsar* or *Scipio*? *IN CASAI*, and ye shall see how I defend my thesis! But our great *Maisilius Ficinus* wants an abstract theme, of course!

FICINO Let your mind have repose, *Laurentius*! You will wear yourself out.

LORENZO Wisdom is worthy the sacrifice of one's last strength. There is so much to clear up! It often used to seem to me as though everything lay clear and open before me but now I see only darkness and confusion. How is it with the immortality of the soul? Tell me!

PULCI An old, a treacherous question—and not to be answered *ex abrupto* like that. They say that *Aristotle* himself, even in the kingdom of the shades, was still going about with equivocal phrases, in order not to commit himself—though he was as dead as a door-nail and yet alive. Let anyone try to make it out from his writings!

LORENZO (laughing heartily) Good! But now, *Angelo*, say something serious.

POLIZIANO You are immortal, my *Luio*! Must I tell you so? Not everybody is. Not the masses, not the small and unknown man. But you shall share the enlightened society of the laurel-crowned spirits.

LORENZO: And why I?

PICO: Now, by the blue-eyed *Athena*! You have written carnival songs which I have not scrupled to place above *Alighieri's* great poem!

FICINO You have divine origins, forget it not. The six balls in

your arms signify the apples of the Hesperides, where your stock had its rise.

POLIZIANO: They will know how to welcome you, singer of the "Rencia", *pater patriæ*! They will celebrate your coming. Cicero, the Fabians, Curius, Fabricius, and all the others will surround you and lead you into the hall of fame, which echoes with the music of the spheres.

LORENZO: That is poesy, poesy, my friend! That is beauty, beauty—but neither knowledge nor consolation!

PULCI: Yes, yes, it is a little thin, your music of the spheres, Messer Politian. It is small comfort. Do not die, Lauro, it would be stupid. You know Achilles' answer, when Odysseus visited him in Hades and asked how he fared. "I assure you," said he, "that we departed have the strongest desire to return to life." The body, lad! The body is the main thing. The body cannot be substituted for by any music of the spheres! Oh, forgive me! Are you worse?

LORENZO (*very pale*): Doctor—a coldness is coming round my heart—do you hear? A horror seizes upon me—help! It is death. . . . What does it mean, that suddenly all power is gone from my brain and my entrails? I am lost . . . I am forsaken. . . . Dry the sweat from my brow. . . . Do not despise me. My spirit is steadfast, this fear is in my body.

PIERLEONI: It is nothing. Drink this good beaker of Greek wine. I have been begging your Magnificence to go to bed.

LORENZO: If you want me to be able to breathe, let me sit in a chair. I must see about me all you who love me. I must hear your voices. Death is horrible, Pico. You cannot grasp it. No one here can grasp it, save myself, who must die. I have so dearly loved life that I held death to be the triumph of life. That was poetry and extravagance. It is gone, it fails one at the pinch. For I have seen dissolution unroll before me, the decay of the tomb.—Quick, Ficino, quick, dear, wise old Ficino! What have you taught me, that I might face death with fortitude? I have forgotten. What is your uttermost wisdom, Ficino?

FICINO: I taught you that Plato's "Idea" and the "First Form" of Aristotle are one and the same; that is, the sensitive soul, the *tertia essentia* of bodies, which in man, the microcosm of creation, is distinguished from the intellectual soul in that it—

LORENZO: Stop, wait a minute. I am confused. I understood that

once; perhaps I felt it. But now I struggle in vain to do so. I am tired. I long to have something simple to hold fast to. Purgatory is simpler than Plato; you will have to admit that, Marsilius. Was it not a Franciscan father who came to me today?

POLIZIANO: Yes, beloved, a confessor came from that order.

LORENZO: A rascal. A clever head. I was ashamed to take the business seriously before him. I turned a few good Florentine phrases when he waited on me with his sacraments and he smiled like the man of the world he was. I confess that the ceremony did not soothe me much. The Father's morals were all too complaisant. He forgave me my sins as though they were boyish pranks. But I doubt if such absolution be quite valid in high places. I might have confessed that I had murdered my father and mother and he would have signed the cross over me with the greatest obligingness. No wonder. I am the master. But when the end comes, there are drawbacks about being the master whom nobody dare offend. I need a confessor who would be as priest what I have been as mocker and sinner. . . . What is it your eyes say, Pico? You have something in your mind. You are hiding your thoughts.

PICO: What thoughts, my Lorenzo?

LORENZO: You are thinking of a priest who would be fit to be my confessor, who would dare to damn me, who has already dared, Pico. . . .

PICO: What priest—?

LORENZO: The priest. What say, Marsilius? The Platonic idea of the priest, become person and will—

POLIZIANO: I implore you, my dear Lord, turn your thoughts to gayer pictures! You cloud your spirits with thoughts unworthy for you to think. Do not forget yourself, Lorenzo de' Medici!

LORENZO: Truly, that will I not. Thanks, my Angelo. I feel better. We will be gay. We will laugh. Laughter is a sunbeam of the soul, so says a classic. We will let our souls shine in the recollection of what has been.

PICO: And what will be again.

LORENZO: Enough that it has been. This was wont to be the hour when we walked together to a spring. You remember? We lay in a ring upon the rolling sward, with the childlike prattle of the water in our midst. And we spent the time till the evening meal with each of us telling a tale.

PICO: What a charming hour! And how we admired you! Perhaps in the forenoon you may have been working out a new law for the statutes, designed to give power more fully into your hands, that you might be in a position to bless Florence still more freely with beauty and joy; perhaps uttered the death sentence upon some noble adversary; argued in the Platonic Academy upon virtue; presided over a symposium in a group of artists and lovely women; at table solved theoretic questions in art and poetry—and in all that you had brought your whole mind to bear and now were sharing the evening play of our minds, as fresh and detached as though you had not given out any part of your vital energy.

PIERLEONI: Yes, you were never niggard with your strength, my gracious Lord.

LORENZO: Was I not, my astronomical doctor? Did I not bend them to my will, despite stars and portents, which had destined me to your careful charge? Yes, I have lived. Come, let us remember. Remember with me, my friends. Remember the drunken starry nights, when we rose from our wine, you, Pico, Luigi, Angelo, you, mad Ugolino, Cardiere the ecstatic musician, and all the rest—when singing and twanging the lute we stormed the sleeping streets and inflamed maidens in their chambers by the verses we sent up to them.

POLIZIANO (*rapturously*): Alcibiades!

LORENZO: And the carnival, remember the carnival! When pleasure like a torrent overflowed the bounds of everyday, when wine ran in the streets and the populace in the squares danced and shouted the songs I composed for them; when Florence surrendered to the god of love, and men's dignity and women's modesty reeled in one intoxicated shout: *Evve!* When the holy madness seized even children and kindled their senses to love before its time.

POLIZIANO: You were Dionysus.

LORENZO: And the kingdom was mine! And the sway of my soul went abroad! And the fire of my longing kindled the woman's breast, so that she fell to me, and the ugly weakling became lord of her beauty—

PICO: Lord of beauty—in that name we salute you! Speak not as though you *had been* all that!

FIorenza

LORENZO (*after a moment of silence, gesturing with his head behind him*): Someone wants to come in.

A PAGE (*half-way down the stairs*): Signor Niccolo Cambi has come from Florence and begs to be admitted to your Grace.

PIERLEONI: The Magnifico is receiving nobody.

LORENZO: Why not? Signor Niccolo is my friend. He comes from Florence—I feel quite well. I want to see him.

2

The page conducts the merchant Niccolo Cambi from the gallery down the steps into the room, leads him to Lorenzo, and withdraws with a low bow. Cambi is a citizen, respectable, well dressed, already a little stout, with a lively Florentine face. His shoes and stockings are dusty. He wears a light-grey cloak over darker undergarments.

LORENZO: A welcome visit, Messer Niccolo. Do not take it for discourtesy that I remain seated. I am a little unwell these days.

CAMBI: Enough to see you! To hear your voice again! My heart is lightened thereby. Good evening, gentlemen. You in particular, illustrious Prince, you, Messer Pulci, Master Poliziano! My faith, the great translator of Plato too! Messer Pierleoni! To see you again, Magnifico! To hear you speak! To feel the living pressure of your hand!

LORENZO: Then you had not expected it?

CAMBI: Why not? Certainly, of course.

LORENZO: Sit down. Push your chair close to mine. You rode up? You are overheated; did you ride so fast, then? Are you on business? Messages from Florence?

CAMBI: But why? Must one always have business with you, messages for you, in order to feel impelled to see you? My business is to look you a little while in the eye, witness my love to you, and assure myself afresh of yours. My message, to tell in all the streets of Florence that you are of good cheer, that soon we shall be able to celebrate your return to health.

LORENZO: So Florence busies itself about my illness?

CAMBI: It certainly does! One cannot say that it is exactly indifferent to it, ha ha! The Magnifico is naïve in his question. But I

mean to give those rascals the lie who disquiet the people without reason and make them prey to sinister rumours.

LORENZO: There are such rascals, then?

CAMBI: There are, there are! And, Magnifico, you would do well, you would do very well, to put a stop to their activities without delay. I see you up, I see you out of bed—could you not come to Florence? Even for an hour? Just to show yourself five seconds long at a window?

LORENZO: Master Niccolo Cambi, what is going on in Florence?

CAMBI: Nothing, nothing. God keep me! Messer Pierleoni—my visit is untimely. Shall I withdraw?

LORENZO: My desire, my will, are what count here. (*With an effort at gentleness*) You will oblige me very much, honest Messer Niccolo, by speaking briefly and without reserve.

CAMBI: Then I will do so. To whom should one speak, to whom bring these fears and cares, if not to you? Things are not in Florence as they were, Magnifico! Vile machinations are afoot. The source whence these rumours are disseminated is known, which report you to be either already dead or sickened beyond cure: they come from the monkish party, from the "Weepers," from the party of the Ferrarese. . . .

LORENZO (*who has started at mention of the Ferrarese, with forced lightness*): You hear, Pico? They come from your discovery, our monk.

CAMBI: Pardon me, illustrious Prince, it is the truth. I know that you fostered him, that you first drew attention to his strange new works, I know it. And I would not assert, either, that I do not know how to value his gifts. I am not so behind the times. His performances are titbits for a spoilt and licensed taste, that is beyond a doubt. I am not speaking of him. I am speaking of the influence he wields, which is—it is possible—independent of his intentions.

POLIZIANO: Do you think so?

CAMBI: The people, Magnifico, the people! We can afford to smile when young sprigs of the nobility forswear dancing, singing and all frivolity, and enter a cloister. But the people! All day they run irresolute through the streets, they look darkly at the beautiful houses of the rich and know nothing better to do than

to throng the cathedral to hear the sermons—a dense, silent crowd, inwardly distraught, a great acreage of muddled heads, all turned in his direction, in the direction of the lean little monk up above them. When the Frate is carried back in triumph to San Marco, the masses choke the streets again and resume their obstinate, mischief-breeding activities. Before the house of Guidi, chancellor of the city archives, and in front of Miniati's the administrator of municipal debts, they have been disorderly and insulting: for Brother Girolamo designated both of these citizens as your tools, Magnifico, as people who connived with you how to squeeze new taxes from the poor for your festivities. Barbarous, insane things are happening. Before I left Florence I heard that a group of mechanics forced themselves into the house of a wealthy and art-loving citizen and broke a statue in the vestibule—(*Pained exclamations from his audience.*)

LORENZO: Hush! An antique?

CAMBI: No, it seems to have been new and not very valuable. But, O Magnifico, it is not that which you must hear! There have been noisy demonstrations before the palace all day. I was in the Piazza. I was present. There were shouts from the people, which I could have wished not to hear, not to understand. It sounded like "Down with the golden balls!"

POLIZIANO: That is treason! That is ingratitude and treachery!

PICO: It is the childish love of the populace for political cries—and nothing more! They should be dispersed with the pikes.

CAMBI: And yet another cry rose above these—a strange cry, never heard before—once, twice, and again. I did not understand, I am as you know a little deaf in one ear. But when I listened very carefully, I heard it clear and plain: "Evviva Christo!"

(*Silence*)

CAMBI: You are silent, Magnifico.

LORENZO: What was the cry?

CAMBI: The one against your arms?

LORENZO: The other.

CAMBI: *Evviva Christo!*

(*Silence. Lorenzo has collapsed into the cushions; his eyes are closed.*)

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PIERLEONI: Go, gentlemen! In God's name, go! You see, he is exhausted.

CAMBI: Magnifico, I wish you good repose. I have done my mission. You had to know how things stand with us. You are not angry?

LORENZO: Go, friend. . . . No, I am not angry with you. Go. . . . Tell Florence—no, tell her nothing. She is a woman, one must take care what one says or has said to her. She runs after you with burning desire when you seem cool and strong and despises you when you betray that you are lost in love for her. Go, friend, say nothing. Say that I am well and that I laugh at what I have heard.

CAMBI: That will I. By Bacchus, that will I say. That is a good message, by my faith. And so be in good health, Laurentius Medici. And come to Florence so soon as you can. Farewell! (He hurries off.)

3

LORENZO (after a pause): Pico!

PICO: I am at your side, my Lorenzo.

LORENZO: Look at me. Seems to me you look a little embarrassed, eh, my subtle Pico? What have you to say now?

PICO: Nothing at all. What should I say? The people are drunk—with drunkenness of a sort different from that you have known so long how to cause in them. Tell the Bargello, it will know how to sober them.

LORENZO: Pico! Mæcenas! My subtle innovator! To call in the hangman's services against the spirit? That was not subtle!

PICO: One counsel or the other. Call him in, then. Bewitch him. Do you think this petty and solitary soul can withstand the brilliant allurements of your offers of friendliness?

LORENZO: It will, my Pico, it will! I know it better than do you, whose inquiring spirit discovered it for us. It is full of hate and mean opposition. Its gifts do not make it blithe or friendly—only more obstinate. Do you understand that? He did not come to me when he became prior—prior in that San Marco which my own grandfather built. He stuck dumbly to his priestly independence. See, thought I to myself, a stranger enters my house and has

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not even the decency to pay me a visit. But I was silent. I shrugged my shoulders at the little man's incivility. He reviled me from the pulpit, indirectly and by name. I went—you did not know it—to seek him out. More than once I attended mass at San Marco and afterward stopped some hour in the cloister garden, awaiting his summons. Do you think he paused in his literary labours to be hospitable to a guest who was after all more than a guest? I went further. I am not used to have men deny themselves to me. I sent presents to the cloister and gifts to charity. He took them as signs of yielding and never once thanked me. I let them find gold coins in the offertory boxes. He gave them to the poor-wardens of San Martino; the copper and silver, he said, were enough for the needs of the cloister. Do you understand? He wants war. He wants hostility. Approaches, homage, he pockets, and gives nothing in return. He cannot be shamed. Success does not soften him nor his mood. He came a nothing, a beggar, to Florence. What he is after today is a decision between me and him.

PICO: Dear friend, what fancies! He is ill and wretched. His digestion is ruined, from watching, from ecstasies. He lives on salad and water. May he enjoy them! Is he Lorenzo, who even in suffering is courteous and full of charm? Do you expect pleasant social intercourse with a father confessor? Let him have his way. And let the childish populace have theirs. Any measures you would take would give the situation a serious complexion which it has not got. Only get well, only show your face again to your city.

(There is a general backward movement. A pale and breathless youth, in a distracted condition, appears rushing down the steps. It is Ognibene, a young painter. He leans on the balustrade a moment, quite exhausted, one foot a step lower than the other.)

OGNIBENE: Lorenzo! You are here. Thank God, I have found him. Your Excellency, dear and gracious lord, forgive me for my urgent haste; I pressed onwards, I would not let them bar the way to you. I must speak to you. I ran—Oh, my God! *(He kneels beside the Magnifico and takes his hand imploringly in both his own.)*

LORENZO: Ognibene! Indeed, you alarm me. No, let him lie

where he is. He has audience. He is a gifted youth and moreover Botticelli's pupil. What is it, Ognibene?

OGNIBENE: I ran—I came—from Florence, from my master's shop. Ah, my master! Ah, the picture! The wonderful, beautiful new picture! Forgive me! I had not time to put on my cloak. I ran as I was. The monk! My master! Lauro, win him back to you!

LORENZO (*in alarm, threateningly*): Pico! . . . Hush! I will hear nothing. I will not hear it. Withdraw. . . . Speak, boy, speak low. What of Botticelli?

OGNIBENE: You know that he was painting a new picture. What am I asking—he was painting it for you! I was allowed to help him . . . and trembled for joy as I saw it grow. Often I slipped alone into the workshop and knelt down in the stillness where it stood and gleamed—it was more beautiful than the Primavera, more beautiful than the Pallas, lovelier than the Birth of Aphrodite. It was youth, it was bliss, it was ravishment, painted with sunshine—

LORENZO: And now? You must part?

OGNIBENE: Since he first heard Brother Girolamo in the cathedral he has worked heavily and without joy. Often he sat silent on a stool with his head in both hands and brooded. And when he raised his head he stared at the picture with eyes full of conflicting horrors. And today—

LORENZO: And today?

OGNIBENE: Today he was in San Marco after the sermon. In the Frate's cell. Two hours or three, I do not know. And when he came home he was as though dead—full of peace, but dead. "Ognibene," he said, "God has called me with a frightful voice. There is no healing in beauty and in the delight of the eyes. Tell the Magnifico that I served Satan and that from now I will serve Jesus the King, whose representative in Florence is His prophet Girolamo. When I take my brush now I will paint in deep humility the Mother of Sorrows—tell the Medici that. Now will I save my soul." And as he said that he took a knife from the colour table and cut and slashed it across and across so that the tatters hung down. . . . (*He sobs with his head in his hands, as though his heart would break.*)

LORENZO (*with clenched fists, rigid with pain and rage*): Sandro. . . .

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OGNIBENE: Lauro, Lauro, what shall we do? I mean—what does your Excellency command? Will you summon him? Will you speak to him? I think if he saw you—Command me, order me what to do. I will run back. I will bring my master to you despite the darkness. You can do anything. You will lighten and set free his spirit.

LORLENZO (*gloomy and exhausted*): No. Let it go. It is too late, for today. I mean, it is too late in the afternoon. Be brave and go. Go to your work. Or to your wine. Take a girl—forget. I would be alone. Go, till I call you. No, Pico, you too. And listen—send me the boys. I want to talk to Gino and Piero. They may come in now. And then go.

(They all leave, some by the stairs, some by the door front right. Lorenzo remains alone, sunk in his chair, clutching the lions' heads on the arms with his emaciated hands. His chin rests on his breast, his gaze seems to burrow deep into his own thoughts.)

4

LORENZO (*dully and brokenly, between pauses*): Jealousy—I have never known what it was.—I was alone. Where was there a purpose like to mine . . . a knowledge of power? Here!—Often I marvelled.—And I made it serve.—It was beautiful, here within me.—Distraction—suffering—burning—smiling? All in vain. I hate him. I hate him too. He triumphs. For he is upright. He is effective. He wasted himself, like me, 'c was not wise. But he had enough left—just enough left, to do it. Perhaps because he is of commoner stuff.—The picture? Let it go. A small matter here—where we are dealing with souls. We are dealing with the kingdom. *(His eyes rest on the bust between the door and the window. He continues to muse. Piero and Giovanni come cautiously through the portières of the door right front, approach him, and kiss his hands.)*

GIOVANNI (*knelling*): How are you, Father?

LORENZO: Oh, so it is you. You don't often come, gentlemen. Why has one sons? For show? To make an appearance? To make one look more imposing? Just as one marries a wife, of noble Roman blood, marries her in Rome by proxy and gets children

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with her hardly knowing her, for reasons of state? Is that the way?

GIOVANN: Father, you have been sincerely in our thoughts.

PIERO: We were impatiently awaiting your summons.

LORENZO: You are most courteous. Very well brought up. It would be exacting to ask more, I suppose. How true it is that father and son are furthest of all from each other. Relations between them are stranger and more uncomfortable than between man and wife. Well, let that be. One must not give anything away. Must not seek love too eagerly. Still, I confess, I have had you in my mind, I have thought of your welfare. That is why I had you summoned. . . . It seemed to me I had a few words to say to you, and that I should like to have you stand before me. You look at me searchingly—how do you find me?

GIOVANNI: Better, Father, much better. You have a little colour.

LORENZO: Really? My friendly little Giovanni. See, I lift my hand. I will to do it, and do it. It trembles—and falls. And falls. There it lies; quite white. I could not hold it up. Come here, Nino; bend over, Piero. I stand with one foot in Charon's bark.

GIOVANNI: No, no, Father! Do not speak like that. Pierleoni—

LORENZO: Pierleoni is a ninny. He and his rival with his draught of precious stones. I am at my last hour. I am going to hear the grass grow, as Pulci says. I am going, and you remain. Now, Piero, what have you to say to that?

PIERO: God grant you a long life, Father.

LORENZO: Very polite. But to come to the point: Are you ready to step into my shoes?

PIERO: If it must be so, yes, Father.

LORENZO: Fiorenza—you love her? Patience a little. My thoughts are confused, that I admit. I see everything in a lurid light, as in a conflagration; one thing flows into another in my mind.

GIOVANNI: Perhaps we ought to go, Father?

LORENZO: Ah, the little one is afraid. No, stay here, Nino. The fever gives me courage to speak out my feelings boldly. What I say sounds odd. But reason is at work. Piero, I speak to you. Your expectancy of power is great, and well founded—but it is not sure, not unimpeachable. You cannot rest idly upon it. We are not

kings, not princes in Florence. We have no document on which our power is secured. We rule without a crown, by natural right, by our own strength. We became great of ourselves, by industry, by struggle, by self-discipline; the idle throng stood amazed and then submitted. But such power, my son, must daily be won afresh. Glory, love, the submission of others—these are all false and fickle things. If you think to rule, to shine without shining deeds, Florence will be lost to you. You will hear your name cried aloud, they will strew the laurel at your feet, they will lift you on their shields, recount your great deeds with slavish exaggeration; that is but for the moment, for what you have done up to now; it secures not a single morrow, promises no future like the past—even as they shout you may be losing ground. Be on your guard. Be cool-headed. Be aloof. They think only of themselves. They need to pay homage—homage is so easy to pay! But no one will think of sharing your struggles, your pains, your cares, your own deep fears. Guard yourself from the injurious contempt of these same idle acclamations. You stand alone, you stand entirely by yourself. Do you understand? Be stern with yourself. Do not be rendered soft and careless, for if you do, Florence will be lost to you. Do you understand?

PIERO: Yes, Father.

LORENZO: Count as nothing the outward glitter of power. Cosimo the Great shunned the eyes and the homage of the crowd, that its love might not exhaust itself in acclamations. Oh, how wise he was! How much shrewdness passion needs, to be creative! And you are foolish—I know you. You are too much like your mother. You have too much Orsini blood in your veins. You want to be painted in armour play the prince in all the streets of Florence. Do not be a fool. Take care! Florence is sharp-eyed and loose-tongued. Be reserved—and reign! . . . Remember, too, that we are of hurgher, not noble stock; that we are what we are only because of the people; that our only foe is he who would estrange the people from us—do you understand?

PIERO: Yes, Father.

LORENZO: "Yes, Father." Polite, soothing, knowing better. A perfect son. I am certain you do not believe a syllable. Harken, Piero, things may turn out badly, I foresee it. We might fall, be driven out, when I am gone. It might be so—be quiet. Florence is

false; she is a strumpet. Lovely, indeed—ah, lovely, but a strumpet. She might come to give herself to a wooer who wooed her with scorpions. So, if that should hap, Piero, if the foolish people should rise in wrath against us, then, Piero, listen, save our treasure, save the treasure of beauty which through three generations we have gathered together. I see it spread out in the palace, in the villas. I could touch the marble limbs, drink in with my eyes the glowing colour of the paintings—put my hands on the splendid vases, the gems, the inlay work, the coins, the gay majolica. You see, my children, it was not only my money and my zeal, it was my worth as a citizen I spent upon them. Who does not understand me would condemn. I made no scruple to seize the property of the state when I needed money to pay for my collections and my feasts. Unrighteous goods? Rubbish! I was the state. The state was I. Pericles himself took public money unhesitatingly when he needed it. And beauty is above law and virtue. Enough. But when they rave against it, then, Piero, save our treasures of beauty. Rescue them. I let all else go, but protect them with your life. This is my last will. You promise me?

PIERO: Be without care, Father.

LORENZO: But have a care yourself! Be shrewd. I do not believe you will be shrewd but that is my advice.—And you, Vannino, my friendly little Giovanni! With a quiet heart I leave you. For you I have no misgivings. Your path is marked out. It will lead you to the throne of Saint Peter. You will add to our arms the triple tiara and the crossed keys. Have you any idea what that means? Why I put that in train with all my skill? A Medici in the seat of Christ? Do you understand? Do not speak. But if you understand, smile with your eyes into mine. He smiles—see, he smiles. Come, let me kiss you on your brow. Farewell. Live joyously. I summon you to no great deeds. You are not made for bearing heavy burdens of guilt and greatness. Keep yourself free of deeds of violence and crime too great for you. Be innocent, be undisturbed. Cover yourself not with blood. Be a happy father to the populace. Let the Vatican ring with merriment and the sound of lutes. Let jests and jollity be the lightnings that flash from the throne of this son of Zeus. May beauty and the arts flourish beneath your staff of power, and joy go out from your throne into all the lands. I have your promise?

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GIOVANNI: I will ever be dutifully mindful of your words, dear Father.

LORENZO: Then leave me now. And thanks to you both—go now. I am very weary. My soul yearns for deep stillness. Farewell, my sons. Love one another. Think of me, and farewell.

(The brothers quietly leave the room by the same door. Giovanni with a charming gesture makes way for Picro to pass.)

5

LORENZO (*alone*): "Yes, Father." He understood not a word. I was talking to myself. It has not eased my mind. There is one to whom to speak out all one's mind would avail. Impossible. Ah, Florence, Florence! If she were to yield herself to him, this frightful Christian! She loved me, she for whom we wrestle, this sombre monk and I. O world! O deep desire! O love dream of power, sweeter, more consuming—one must not possess. Longing is a giant's power, owning unmins. Our bliss was mutual so long as my slender strength sufficed. The wanton responds to the hero's mighty charms. Now that I am broken, she despises me. . . . She is vulgar, boundlessly vulgar and cruel. Why do we vie for her favour? Ah, I am weary unto death!

(Fiore appears in the background, at the top of the steps; her hands crossed over her abdomen, artificial, symmetrical, mysterious. From where she stands she flashes a quick glance across at Lorenzo from beneath her lowered lids, then descends slowly into the room, with a smile.)

FIORE: How goes it with the Lord of Florence?

LORENZO (*starts and struggles to sit upright. A painful, pathetic smile spreads over his features*): Well, very well, excellently well, my beauty! Is it you? I am well. Why should I not be so? Did I seem a little absorbed in thought as I sat here? I was composing a poem. I was conceiving a little sonnet to the exquisiteness of your nostrils when they dilate in mock r. And since I was composing poetry, it follows I am well; I am as sound as a fish swimming in its native element. For he who versifies thereby evinces a plenitude of fancy.

FIORE: Then I congratulate you.

LORENZO: And I thank you, my gracious goddess. I do not see

you; yet your sweet, cool voice laves and refreshes my heart. And now, now I will see you; ah, your loveliness! Will you sit down beside me? Here on this stool? Though it would be more fitting were I to take my place at your feet. You see, they have left me alone—and I complain not. Indeed, I may have sent them on their way, I needed them not. I could meditate more profoundly upon your charms, and love you better, being alone.

FIORE: So you still love me, Lorenzo de' Medici?

LORENZO: Love you still? I should perhaps love you no more. You do not know that all the strength of my being and my understanding are consumed in love of you?

FIORE: Then I do not understand why you do not stir out of your cushions to make fêtes for me.

LORENZO: Fêtes? Certainly. But—fêtes—you see, I am a little tired.

FIORE: Of me?

LORENZO: Sharp and sweet! I love your scorn.

FIORE: How should you be tired, if not of me?

LORENZO: Permit me to lay my hand upon your brow. It is hot, is it not? This fever—Pierleoni says it comes from the unfavourable position of Jupiter and Venus with respect to the sun and to each other, which is harmful to me. Pierleoni knows nothing. This fever inflamed my blood when I first caught sight of you, when my soul first comprehended all your charms. Since that hour it has not ceased to glow. Do you remember? Ferrara? The Duke came to meet me on the Po in a gilded gondola, surrounded by gay little barks where banners fluttered, music sounded, and I was greeted by a choir of singers. The shores were strewn with flowers, the statues of the joyous gods gleamed white; and between them stood slender boys holding garlands in their hands. But every bark bore a lovely woman, adorned each differently, for these were the cities of Italy, who came to meet me. And one, one I saw among them all, laurel in her hair and lilies in her hand; and the minstrels sang to me in saucy strophes: "Thou are Fiorenza, thou, the only one, the sweet one, the glory and the brilliance, the love and the power, the goal of yearning, thou the flower of the world, thou wilt be mine. . . ." I looked at you and pain seized my heart, an ache, a deep oppression and a stubborn grief—what shall I call it? A longing for thee! For thee! To

possess thee, thou flower of the world, thou many-hued seduction, and of thee to die!

FIORÉ: Poor victor! What would you not give to receive this pain back again for your weariness!

LORENZO: I feel it. It never left me again. Does one possess you? Does the struggle to win you ever end? Is there ever repose in your arms? . . . You came to me, you wonderful creature. Do you remember the evening after the fête? You came. . . . You came in to me through the marble doorway. And when for the first time I embraced you in the golden darkness of the room and won your lips with my mouth—then I felt the dagger you carry in your bodice and thought of Judith. Your father hated us Medici. He joined the Pitti, we sent him away to misery, and his exile saw your beauty reach its flower. Perhaps you only gave yourself to be revenged? Perhaps in the moment of deepest desire the poisoned death found its mark? How often, let us be never so drunken with love, I searched your unfathomable eyes, listened to what lay behind your cool and polished words. . . . Have you ever loved me? Ever loved anyone to whom you gave yourself? Or do you only out of curiosity obey the power of desire, which may never slumber satiated, which having once possessed must ever be born anew, if it will not lose you ignominiously? For him, madonna, who has once tasted of your charms, there can be no more repose, in conning either memories of the past or dreams of the future. Only a constant, piercing present, wakeful, fateful, perilous, and—consuming.

FIORÉ: Hearken, my Lord Lorenzo. I am not come to argue with you about the art of love. I am a woman; yet it often seemed that you laid stress upon my view and voice even in serious matters?

LORENZO: Speak, I beg you.

FIORÉ: Well, then, I came to express to you my astonishment at the negligence with which you look on at the evil course which public affairs are taking. . . . You have never heard of a monk. Hieronymus Ferrarensis by name and I think of San Marco?

LORENZO (*looking at her*): I have heard of him.

FIORÉ: And heard that he subdues the city to himself with words, brings youth to his feet, makes artists repent in sackcloth and ashes, stirs up the populace against you and your rule, and lets himself be the object of worship as envoy of the Crucified?

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LORENZO : I have heard of it.

FIGIORE : Indeed—and you suffer all this mildly, sitting in weakness amid your cushions?

LORENZO : If Florence loves him, I cannot and I will not hinder it.

FIGIORE : He insults Florence.

LORENZO : And Florence loves him for it.

FIGIORE : Would you endure to have him insult me too?

LORENZO : Did he do so?

FIGIORE : I will tell you all the tale from the beginning. It lies further back than events in Santa Maria del Fiore.

LORENZO : You were in the cathedral?

FIGIORE : Like the rest of the world.

LORENZO : You went often to the cathedral?

FIGIORE : As often as it pleased me. And from a curiosity better grounded than that of others. I know this monk from early days.

LORENZO : From early days?

FIGIORE : From days when your glory's crown still hovered invisible high above your head. It is quickly told. At Ferrara, near the hut where my father and I found refuge from your bravoës, there lived a citizen named Niccolo, learned, wealthy, and of ancient lineage, in favour at court. He lived there with his wife, Monna Helena, and two daughters and four sons. The eldest son had gone for a soldier. I was a child still, or almost a child, twelve years, thirteen—yet I was already beautiful (if you can believe it) and youths gazed after me. I was on friendly terms with my neighbours. We visited each other, we talked at the windows, walked together in summer outside the city walls, played games in the fields, wove wreaths for each other's heads. But one of our neighbour's sons shut himself away from our merry company, the second eldest, about eighteen years old, I think : small, weak, ugly as darkness. He feared people. When all Ferrara streamed out of doors to the public festivals, he buried himself in his books, played mournful melodies upon his lute, and wrote what no one was allowed to read. They thought to make a physician of him, and he applied himself to the study of philosophy, sitting in his little chamber bowed over Thomas Aquinas and the expounders of Aristotle. Often we teased him and threw orange-peel through the window on his writing-desk; he would look up with an uneasy

and contemptuous smile. Between us two, things stood very strangely. He seemed to flee the sight of me with fear and loathing, yet to be condemned to meet me for ever, indoors and out and everywhere I went. Then he seemed to play the coward and avoid me, yet he would force himself, pressing his thick lips together as he came towards me, passed and greeted me, blushing red and bending on me a sour and injured gaze. In this wise I came to understand that he was in love with me, and I rejoiced in the power I had over his gloomy arrogance. I played with him and led him on, I gave him hope and dashed it with a look. It thrilled me to know that my eyes could control the flow of his blood. He grew more lean and silent still, he began a fast that hollowed out the caverns of his eye; one saw him sitting long hours in church bruising his brow against the altar step. But one day, out of curiosity, I brought it about that he was alone with me in a room at twilight. I sat silent and waited. Then he groaned and was as though pulled towards me, and whispered and confessed. I made as though astonished and repulsed him; he seemed then to rave, almost like an animal, begging me with gasps and panting with parched lips to yield me to him. With horror and disgust I thrust him from me—it may even be I struck at him, since he would not leave his avid clinging. And when I did so, he tore himself away and stood up with a shriek, inarticulate and hoarse, and rushed off, his fists before his eyes.

LORENZO: I understand, I understand.

FIORÉ: He was named Girolamo. That night he fled to Bologna, and entered a cloister of Dominicans. He preached repentance in unheard-of accents. Folk laughed, they stared, they were subdued. His name went through all Italy. And your spoilt curiosity, gentlemen of Florence, drew him hither. And he waxes great in this Florence.

LORENZO: You have made him great.

FIORÉ: I—have made him? Then hear how he rewards me. He has insulted me before the populace, today, in the cathedral . . . pointed at me with his finger, spat upon me with words, compared me to the great Babylon, with whom kings have commerce!

LORENZO: Kings! You made him great. Greater than I, to whom you gave yourself.

FIORÉ: Greater than you? That I find still undecided; it will

be decided. Hearken, my friend—if you summoned him? Here before you? Be it only to see how the poor little monk stumbles over the carpet when in the presence of the Magnifico. For his Rhodus would be here. Hear him, answer him. Let him measure himself against you. And if you see his worthlessness, then send him back to his cell, back to his pulpit. Let him insult you further as he will, you—and me. And if you feel his power predominant, then it lies with you to deny it out of existence with arguments of the sternest and coldest. He is in your grasp; if you are a man he will never escape from it. . . .

LORENZO: And if I should shame to employ such arguments? You know that I should thus shame.

FIORE: I know nothing. I wait. I wait to see how each one shows himself. I await the event. From me, indeed, expect no thanks if you feel shame to show yourself the stronger!

LORENZO: He would not come. On what pretext could one call him hither?

FIORE: Indeed, you are very ailing. Have you never lied? You call the priest. You feel ill. You want to confess. You seek for spiritual counsel.

LORENZO: In very truth I seek it. I yearn for it. Emptiness and horror are all about me at this moment. I see you not, madonna. I see not that you are beautiful. No longer do I understand what desire is. I should like to despise you, but I only shudder at you. Whither shall I turn? Call Ficino! Ah, that is naught. Call Brother Girolamo. You are right. Let him come.

FIORE: He is coming.

LORENZO: How then—he is coming?

FIORE: I sent for him to you. I knew you desired him. I sent for him today after the sermon. After he had insulted me. He is on the way. He may be here at any moment.

LORENZO: At any moment. By God, you know how to act! Your zeal for this meeting is great. At any moment . . . the enemy in Careggi! Today, at once. Good, then, let him come. Am I afraid? If he comes I will not send him away. If I will still hear him; it may be the time has come. But first call someone about me. Summon my companions. Have Pico come and the others. (*Fiore touches a bell.*) Thank you, madonna. I love you. I were ill armed against this prophet did I not love you. . . . Ah, there you are,

FIORENZA

my friends! Lend me yet awhile the pleasure of your blithe company!

6

Pico, Ficino, Poliziano, Pulci, and Pierleoni come down the steps.

PICO: Ah, Lauro! We thought you resting quietly and alone, and you have just finished, so it seems, an appointment and a love-scene. Humble good day, madonna. But, Lauro, seriously: then you must not deny yourself to the jovial youth who have been hours long awaiting your pleasure: a group of artists, with Francesco Romano at their head, Aldobrandino—

LORENZO: He too? Good, good, I will see them. I need them. Let them come. (*A message is sent out by the gallery.*) I am in a good mood, gentlemen. I have had good news. I am receiving a visit. I expect today a charming and famous guest. No, you could not guess. Not even you, Pico. But I await him with impatience and am highly gratified that my artists have come to shorten the time before his entrance to my chamber. There they are. See Aldobrandino's innocent red face. And Leone's amorous nose. And Ghino, the bright darling of the gods. Welcome, children!

(The eleven artists come in, making low bows.)

ALDOBRANDINO: Health and blessings to your Excellency!

GRIFONE: Healing and joy to the godlike Laurentius Medici!

(They press round him, kneel down, or bend over his hand.)

LORENZO: I thank you. Be sure that I rejoice to see you all. Let me see, who are there here? Ercole, my brave goldsmith, and Guidantonio, who makes the beautiful chairs. . . . Yes, and I see Simonetto, the glorious architect, and Dionco, who shapes wax in men's images. How is it with art, Pandolfo? I have not said, but I saw Messer Francesco at first glance.

ALDOBRANDINO: Truly, your Excellency, Messer Francesco is a great painter, and despite the closeness of his mouth far ahead of us all in his art; yet in love to you, gracious Lord, not one of us stands behind him, and some, perhaps, might even be before. May

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I mention, since it just occurs to me, that I have not long since come back to breathe my native air?

LORENZO: Yes, yes, my good Aldobrandino, you are right. You were away. You were in Rome. I remember quite clearly. You had work there, did you not?

ALDOBRANDINO: I did indeed, sir, and for lovers of art in high places, if I may say so. But then I heard a report that Lorenzo de' Medici, my good and great patron, was not well, and I dropped everything where it was and hastened to Florence with such zeal that I covered the ground in less than eight hours.

GRIFONE: He is only boasting, my Lord; it is shameless of him, I say. Nobody could cover that distance in eight hours; it is a lie.

ALDOBRANDINO: You hear, my gracious Lord, how this man tries to harm me before you and in your eyes.

LORENZO: Peace, children, there is no cause for hard words. Even if it is impossible to come hither from Rome in eight hours. Aldobrandino in saying so merely shows that he wants to give evidence of his love to me, and that in some vivid and poetical way. I cannot chide him for it.

ALDOBRANDINO: That is a splendid setting out, my Lord. But yet you do not know the depth of my devotion, nor what I am ready to do and suffer in silence for you. . . . So much I must be allowed to say, your Excellency. Good, good, I don't want to make a fuss.

GRIFONE: You are right there. We came here on a more important errand. We must discuss the festivities to be arranged in honour of your recovery, Magnifico.

LORENZO: My recovery --

GRIFONE: That is my suggestion--with your magnanimous permission I ask leave to suggest it. We must consider what a fine opportunity Lorenzo's restoration to health gives us for organizing a beautiful pageant and a ball and public banquet afterwards. My head is full of ideas. Let me manage the whole thing and you shall see a fête the printed descriptions of which will spread throughout Italy.

LORENZO: Good, good, Grifone. Thank you, my lad. I will count on you. We will take up the matter together later. Now I must ask what Ercole has been doing since I saw him last. . . . What are you peering about the room like that for, Guidantonio?

GUIDANTONIO: Pardon, my Lord, I was looking at the furnishing. Some of it is good. The chair your Excellency is sitting on at this minute was made by me. A fine piece. But the other things are quite out of fashion and not the height of good taste. I am working on a room for you which shall most wonderfully combine the classic motifs with the most modern comfort. May I bring you the drawings?

LORENZO: Pray do so one of these days. I shall not be able to resist ordering the room, if it is a genuine Guidantonio in taste and comfort. And now, Ercole, let me hear from you.

ERCOLE: I have done only trifles, sir; still, there are pretty conceits among them. A charming set for salt and pepper, with figures and foliage, I made especially for your table. You will pay me anything I ask, so soon as you see it. Also I have made a medallion with your likeness, with Moses on the reverse striking water from the rock. The inscription runs: *Ut bibat populus*.

LORENZO: And it has drunk, the people! Cast me the medal, my Ercole. Cast it in silver and in copper. I must praise it without even having seen it. You have chosen your motto well—*Ut bibat populus*.

ERCOLE: But the finest of all is a little breviary to the honour of God's Mother, with covers in heavy gold most richly worked. There is an image of the Mother of God on the front, you see, in precious stones—they alone are worth six thousand scudi.

ALDOBRANDINO: Pack up, Ercole! Lorenzo will not buy your breviary.

LORENZO: And why will he not?

ALDOBRANDINO: Because he does not care for the sign of the Virgin. At least he has done his best to have as few as possible of them in Florence. (*Laughter and applause.*)

LEONE: What cheek, Magnifico! That is a shameless piece of plagiarism. I made that joke myself an hour ago, down in the garden. I call these gentlemen to witness.

ALDOBRANDINO: You should not make such an ugly display of your envy, Leone. You may have said something of the sort, I admit it. But it was in quite a different connection, and anyhow it shows a bad character to grudge me the applause these gentlemen would pay to my quickwittedness.

LEONE: If Lauro were not sitting here, and Madonna Fiore, you

braggart, you, I would tell you to your face that you are an empty-headed rattlepate.

ALDOBRANDINO: And I would counter with the absolute truth that you are like nothing so much as a stinking billy-goat.

LORENZO: Aldobrandino! Leone! Enough! I declare the subject closed. I know that you are both of you very witty. Come here, Leone. Tell us a story. Tell us one of your adventures, you jokesmith, you! We will make up for your lost applause. Look how our mistress prays you with her eyes. She loves your historiettes. And our Messer Francesco—his wishes are written on his face. Would you like Leone to tell us a tender tale—yes or no?

FRANCESCO ROMANO (*rolls his black eyes, simpers, then opens his mouth for the first time and says in a loud, naïve voice*): Yes.

LORENZO (*much diverted*): Did you hear, Leone? The master understands painting better than making words; but what he says is weighty and solid. Impossible to refuse. Begin! Madonna is queen of the day. She summons you, and this noble circle waits to hear.

LEONE: Well, then, listen. But I must beg the learned gentlemen to bear one thing in mind. I talk as it comes to me, without art. I am no tale-writer, I make no fables, nor need to fable as a poet does. A poet, it is well known, loves and enjoys only with his inky goose-quill—but I do it with another kind of productive stub. (*Hilarity, cries of "Bravo!"*) And accordingly I will tell you truly how Dan Cupid has favoured me of late. Listen: I was of late in Lombardy, at the house of a friend, which neighbours a convent famed for its abbess, who lives in great piety and in the odour of sanctity. Now, my friend's cousin, named Fiammetta was a nun in this abbey, and I went with him to visit her one day at the grating. Hardly had I set eyes on her when I was enflamed by love for her youth and beauty and in her eyes I read that I was no less attractive to her. From then on I bent all my powers to see how I could gain her intimacy, and as I am not inexperienced in these matters I had soon conceived a plan to take advantage of the fact that a gardener was needed for the convent gardens. I took the precaution of changing my appearance a little, shaved my beard, put on ragged clothing, and applied to the holy and austere abbess for the vacant place. I made out that I was dumb, a capital idea, since it reassured the chaste madame that I was

completely harmless to her flock. I was taken on and went at once to work. And it soon fell out that I met the lovely Fiammetta in the garden, made myself known and explained to her that I was not only not dumb but also not suffering from any other physical lacks—the which she begged me to demonstrate to her more convincingly. And since her desire most fully coincided with mine, she took me into her cell on the first evening that offered, and I remained there the night. And I assure you that whatever skill I lacked in my tasks by day, I was most punctual and adroit at my nightly ones. Yes, the charms of my lovely Fiammetta roused me on more than one night to heroic deeds, and would have gone on doing so, had not envy made an end to our joys. There were two ugly little nuns who had no lovers and had privately to go about as best they could to satisfy their needs. They made the discovery that here in the cloister the goat had been made the gardener; filled with ill will against their sweet sister, they scrupled not to bring their suspicions to the ear of the abbess. In order that no doubt remain, it was decided to take us in the act. They watched; and one evening late, when Fiammetta had opened her door to me, the two envious nuns hastened to the cell of the abbess, pounded on the door, and announced that the fox was in the trap. It may have disturbed the abbess's rest to be thus summoned in the night—as the sequel will show. But at all events she sprang from her bed, flung on her clothes, and rushed with the two spies to Fiammetta's cell. They burst open the door, brought lights, and exposed our embraces to the public eye. Fiammetta and I were stiff with fright. But when I had pulled myself together and looked at the abbess, who was exhausting all the curses and vile names in her vocabulary, I noticed an extraordinary circumstance. The holy female, that is, when she had thought in the darkness to set her hood on her head, had stuck on a priest's small-clothes instead, so that the kneebands hung down on her shoulders in the most singular way. "Madonna," said I, interrupting the stream of her cursings, "will perhaps first button up her headgear and then say on what pleases her to say." Then she noticed what she had done and stood crimson with blushes, for she knew where he was to whom the garment belonged. She rushed off in a fury and with her the two spies, and my Fiammetta and I were left alone to enjoy once more unvexed all the bliss of heaven.

(The general merriment has increased as he talks, certain places being warmly applauded by the artists and humanists. Even Fiore joins in. Lorenzo, completely diverted, has followed the tale with childlike enjoyment. Towards the end of it the whole room resounds with tumultuous mirth. Lorenzo laughs heartily; the artists fit to split themselves. But suddenly the narrator breaks off and there comes an abrupt silence.)

A PAGE (entering through the curtained door front right, announces in a clear, very audible voice): The Prior of San Marco.

(Pause.)

POLIZIANO (horrified, not trusting his ears): What did you say, boy?

PAGE (abashed): The Prior of San Marco.

(Stillness. All present seek Lorenzo helplessly with their eyes. All mouths are open, all eyebrows raised.)

LORENZO (to the page): Come nearer. What do they call you?

PAGE: My name is Gentile, gracious Lord.

LORENZO: Gentile. That is pretty. Go back to the door, Gentile, and come in again. I like to look at you, you walk so well. You have pretty hips. Stand so, as you are. Aldobrandino, notice the line. Take this ring, Gentile, because you have pleased my eyes. And him whom you have announced, let him now come in.

POLIZIANO: You would not!

LORENZO: I will.

(The page goes out. Deathlike stillness reigns. The portière is lifted. The sallow, woebegone, fanatical profile of the Ferrarese is projected slowly into the room. It is irredeemably ugly; its savage expression and large bony structure are in startling contrast to the smallness and sickliness of the rest of his figure. His head is framed in the cowl of the black mantle he wears over his white habit. There is an abrupt depression between the great hooked nose and the narrow peaked forehead. The thick lips are compressed with a sort of finality, emphasized still more by the hollow ashen cheeks. The eyebrows are thick and grow together over the nose, also they are perpetually raised, making horizontal wrinkles in the forehead and giving the little eyes, ringed with the black shadows of exhaus-

tion, a staring and yet vacant expression. He is out of breath from walking at a quick pace through the long passages, but tries to conceal the fact. His hands, now hanging down inside his mantle, look waxen and shake when he raises them. His voice has a nervous, frightened note, yet sometimes inexplicably takes on a hard and savage power.

As he enters, the artists retreat backwards, giving him more than enough room. They form a group; one of them takes his neighbour's arm, turns half round, and stares over his shoulder at the monk, with lifted brows, his lips distorted with amazement, disgust, and fear. They retreat gradually leftwards up the steps and through the gallery, and with them the humanists. Pico is the last to go, casting inquisitive glances back at the group of three persons who remain. At last he goes off, treading softly.

The Ferrarese looks straight ahead and his gaze meets Fiore as she sits in her composed and studied posture at Lorenzo's feet. He starts back, for a moment his face is visited by a tormented expression; then he straightens himself, fixes his eye on Lorenzo, and with his head and the upper part of his body makes a vague gesture of salutation.)

FIORE (has risen. Her hands are folded on her prominent abdomen, her eyes are lowered as she moves towards the Ferrarese and speaks in a high, monotonous murmur): Welcome to Careggi, Master Prior. May I congratulate you on your sermon today? I was a little late, yet not too late to hear the best of it. Be assured that I was highly edified. Your performance is very powerful indeed.—Well? Why are you so silent? It is not fitting that an artist should so stiffly and haughtily pocket the praise he gets, without even the tribute of a disclaiming smile.

THE PRIOR (still breathless, tormented and harsh): I spoke to you in the Duomo. I will speak to you only from my pulpit.

FIORE (affecting a pout): Not everybody is so stern. From the cathedrals of all the arts they speak to me—they make me smile or I give them my ear—and still have enough flesh and blood left over to treat me as a human being.

THE PRIOR: I live only in my pulpit.

FIORE (pretending to shudder): So down here you are dead? Ha, yes, so you are. You are pale and cold. I am here in this room

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with a sick man and a dead man. But once on a time, Mr. Dead Man, a long time ago, you were alive, were you not, and spoke to me here below.

THE PRIOR: I spoke. I shrieked. You smiled. You laughed. You lashed me with opprobrium. You drove me up—up to my pulpit. And now you pay me homage.

FIORE: You use large words. That is the orator's art. I pay you homage? People pay me homage, and I incline to him who knows how to pay it in the best and finest way.

THE PRIOR: I pay you no homage. I revile you. I call you abandoned and an abomination. I call you the bait of Satan, the poison of the spirit, the sword of souls, wolf's milk for him who drinks it, occasion of destruction, nymph, witch, Diana I call you.

FIORE: And you say well. It takes as much talent to revile as to praise. And what if all that seems to me but the last and extremest kind of homage? Can you imagine that? Tell me! You felt it yourself!

THE PRIOR: I understand you not. You heard me in the Duomo. I am unskilled and cannot trifle. But you heard me in the Duomo. The Word is hard and it is holy. He who closes his lips with his finger, Peter Martyr, he is my master.

FIORE: Work and be silent. . . . I find, Magnifico, much resemblance between your guest and Messer Francesco Romano. But, Mr. Dead Man, you came to talk to this sick man here. So I will go, wishing the gentlemen the pleasantest entertainment. I wish you good accord and rich experience. It would seem that it cannot lack.

(She goes up the steps and disappears through the gallery. During the following scene it grows dark.)

7

LORENZO (*seems entirely to have forgotten the Ferrarese, who keeps his burning gaze directed upon him. With bowed head the Magnifico gazes up into space. At length, coming back to himself, he makes a charming effort to assume his man-of-the-world manner and says*): Will you not sit down, Padre?

THE PRIOR (*tempted by weariness to sink down upon a chair near the door, but recovering himself and standing stiffly erect*):

Let me tell you this one thing, Lorenzo de' Medici ! I have seen the world. I know the treachery of princes, their accustomed practice of bloody violence. If this is a snare, if I have been lured hither to be enforced and done away with—then have a care. I am beloved. My words have won souls to me. The people stand behind me. You dare not touch me.

LORENZO (*suppressing a smile*): You are afraid? But no ! Have no fear. It would be far from my mind to lay traitorous hands on a man so extraordinary as yourself. Am I a Malatesta, a Baglioni? You do me less than justice to compare me with these. I am not savage, not without honour. I know how to value your life and work as well as any of your own flock. May I not ask in return that you will look upon mine as direct and fairly?

THE PRIOR: What have you to say to me?

LORENZO: Oh, I have already said some of it. But you speak grudgingly. And you look worn and weary. I do not deceive myself. My eye is sharp for such signs. (*With genuine sympathy*) You are not well?

THE PRIOR: I preached in the cathedral today. Afterwards I was ill. I lay abed. I left my bed only on your summons.

LORENZO: On my—yes, yes, quite right. I am sorry. So your work consumes you, then, so much?

THE PRIOR: My life is tortured. Fever, dysentery, and continuous mental labour for the weal of this city have so weakened all my internal organs that I can no longer bear the least hardship.

LORENZO: By God, you should spare yourself—you ought to rest.

THE PRIOR (*scornfully*): I know no rest. Rest the many know who have no mission. For them it is easy. But an inward fire burns in my limbs and urges me to the pulpit.

LORENZO: An inward fire. I know, I know ! I know this fire. I have called it demon, will, frenzy—but it has no name. It is the madness of him who offers himself up to an unknown god. He despises the base, cautious, home-keeping folk and lets them stare amazed at one for choosing a wild, brief, burning life instead of their long, wretched, frightened one.

THE PRIOR: Choosing? I have not chosen. God summoned me to greatness and to pain and I obeyed.

LORENZO: God—or passion. Ah, Padre, we understand each

other. We shall understand each other.

THE PRIOR: You and I? You blaspheme. Why did you send for the priest? You who have worked evil all your life long!

LORENZO: What do you call evil?

THE PRIOR: All that is against spirit—within us and without.

LORENZO: Against spirit. . . . I will gladly follow you. I called you to listen to you. I beg you, Brother, have faith in my good-will. Tell me, pray: What do you mean by spirit?

THE PRIOR: The power, Lorenzo Medici, which makes for purity and freedom.

LORENZO: That sounds strong—and mild. And yet—why do I shudder? But I will hear you. In us, you say? And so in you as well? You struggle also with yourself?

THE PRIOR: I am born of woman. No flesh is pure. One must know sin, feel it, understand it, in order to hate it. The angels do not hate sin. They are ignorant of it. There have been hours when I rebelled against the order of spirits. It seemed to me that I was higher than the angels.

LORENZO (with *unaccustomed light irony*): A question so daring, so enthralling, that it is worthy being put by you. Yet, dear Brother, a question concerning you alone, and so today we can put it aside. See, I am ill, and fear is in my heart—I make no bones of telling you this. Fear for the world, for myself—who knows?—for truth. I have sought consolation with my Platonists, my artists—and I have found none. Why not? Because they are none of them my sort. They admire me, perhaps, they love me, and they know nothing of me. Courtiers, orators, children—what use is all that to me? You see, I count on you, Padre. I must hear you—about you and about me; I must compare myself, must come to terms with you; then I should have peace—I feel it. You are not like the others. You do not crawl prattling to my feet. You have risen up beside me, you breathe the same air as myself. You hate me, you repulse me, you work against me with all your art—and see, I am in my soul not far from calling you brother.

THE PRIOR (*whose lank cheeks, at the words, have taken on a glow*): I will not be your brother. I am not your brother. There you have it. I am a poor monk, a priest, scorned and despised like all my kind by the whole insolent world of the flesh, and yet I have raised myself and through me my kind to honour, so that I

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throw your brotherliness in your face, Magnifico though you be and a lord of this earth.

LORENZO: You see me inclined to admire you for it.

THE PRIOR: You shall not admire me, you shall hate me. And as I must be frightful to you, so must you fear me. I have heard much of your charm, Lorenzo Medici. It shall not ensnare me. Once more: why did you send for me? You shuddered before the heaped-up measure of your sins, and fear urges you to treat with God—you thirst to learn the conditions of grace. Am I not right?

LORENZO: Not quite—perhaps almost. And treat—yes, you see, that is what I want to do, that is what I am doing. But you are impatient. Let me understand you. You say I have all my life worked against the spirit?

THE PRIOR: Do you ask? Is your soul utterly insensitive, then, as they say your nose is? You have made more the temptations of this earth, the allurements of Satan which he makes run through the flesh like a luscious torment. You have set up the pride of the eye as a god, you have made pleasure spurt from the very walls of Florence—and called it beauty. You have beguiled the masses to believe the rankest lies which paralyse the desire for salvation; you have instigated feasts of gallantry in honour of the glistening surface of life—and called that art.

LORENZO: I perceive a strange contradiction here: You are zealous against art, and yet, Brother, you yourself—you too are an artist!

THE PRIOR: The people see more clearly—they call me a prophet.

LORENZO: What is a prophet, then?

THE PRIOR: An artist who is at the same time a saint.—I have nothing in common with your art of the eyes, Lorenzo de' Medici. My art is holy, for it is knowledge and a flaming denial. Long ago, when I suffered agony, I dreamed of a torch which should light up with mercy all the frightful depths, all the shameful and sorrowful abysses of being, of a divine fire which should be laid to all the world that it might blaze up and perish, together with all its shame and martyrdom in redeeming pity. It was art of which I dreamt.

LORENZO (musing): The earth seemed fair to me.

THE PRIOR: I saw! I saw through the fairness and the appear-

ance! I suffered too much not to insist proudly upon my vision. Shall I tell you a parable? It was in Ferrara. Once my father took me to court with him. I saw the castle of the Estes. I saw the prince with his companions—women, dwarfs, jesters, and enlightened spirits—revelling at table. Music and the dance, sweet odours and feasting were all. Yet sometimes, very low, awesomely faint, another and strange sound rose above the tumult and the luxury: a sound of torment, a groaning and moaning—it came from below, out of frightful dungeons, where the prisoners lay and languished. I saw them too, I asked and was taken down below whence the howling and the horror came. And the sound of the feasting came down to them below; and I knew that those above felt no shame, that not one conscience was even uneasy. And suddenly it seemed as though I must choke with hatred and resistance. . . . And I saw a great bird in the air, beautiful, bold, and blithe of spirit it hovered there. And my heart was gripped by a pain, an aching, a defiance and a profound urge, a fervid wish, a gigantic resolve: could I but break those great pinions!

LORFENZO: So that was your one desire?

THIEF PRIOR: I looked into the heart of the time and saw its forehead with the mark of the whore; shameless was she, gladsome and shameless---can you understand? She would not be ashamed. She took the tapers from the altar of the Crucified and bore them to the sepulchre of one who had created beauty. Beauty—what is beauty? Is it possible not to fathom what she is? If not—who could realize a state of things on earth without being prevented by pain and disgust from still willing it to be? Who? Who? The time! All of you! But not I—I alone! I fled, fled from the abominable sight of such complacency, which laughed at feeling and suffering and redemption. I fled into the monastery, I saved myself in the austere twilight of Holy Church. Here, thought I, in the sanctified precincts of the Cross, here suffering has power to move. Here, so I thought, holiness and wisdom reign, the *sacra litteræ*. What did I see? Here too I saw the Cross betrayed. The wearers of stole and cowl, whom I thought to be my brothers in the company of suffering—I saw them fallen away from the majesty of the spirit. They had compounded with the foe, with the great Babylon. Here also I was alone. Lo, I understood this too: I had to make myself, my very self, great in opposition against the world

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—for I was chosen Christ's vicar. The spirit was born again in me!

LORENZO: Against beauty? Brother, Brother, you are leading me astray. Must there be conflict here too? Must one see the world divided in two hostile camps? Are spirit and beauty opposed to each other?

THE PRIOR: They are. I speak the truth, learnt in suffering. (*A pause. It has grown dark.*) Would you know a sign, manifest when two worlds are eternally strange to each other and may not be reconciled? Lounging is this sign. Where abysses yawn, she spans her rainbow, and where she is, are abysses. Learn, learn, Lorenzo de' Medici: The spirit can yearn towards beauty. In hours of weakness and self-betrayal, in the sweetness of shame, then it happens. For she, who is blithe and lovely and strong, she who is life, she can never understand spirit, she shrinks from it, perhaps would fear it and put it away from her; even mock it pitilessly and drive it back upon itself. But then, Lorenzo de' Medici, it can renounce, it can grow hard under torture and great in solitude and return in power so that she gives herself.

LORENZO: Why do you stop? I am listening—I am closing my eyes to hear. I am hearing the melody of my life. Will you stop so soon? It is so sweet to listen thus, without an effort, to oneself. I scarcely see you. Perhaps it is darkness, perhaps my sight is failing, but my spirit is awake, I listen. And I hear a song: my own song, the deep low song of longing. Girolamo, yet do you not know me? Whither the longing urges, there one is not, that one is not—you know? And yet man likes to confuse himself with his longing. You have heard that people call me the lord of beauty? But I myself am ugly. Yellow, ugly and weak. I adore the senses—and one lacks me, a precious one. I have no sense of smell. I know not the scent of the rose nor of a woman. I am a cripple, a deformed object. Is that only my body? Nature thrust me forth in a contortion; but I have compelled the frenzy and the staggering to measure and rhythm. My soul was a smouldering torment of desire and a flame of lust; I have fanned it to a clear flame. Without my longing I should be but a satyr; and when my poets put me with the company of the Olympians, not one of them dreams of the long, stern discipline which went to bridle my wild nature. It was well so. Had I been born beautiful, I had never made myself the lord of beauty. Hindrance is the will's best friend. To whom

do I say that? To you, who know so painfully well that the hero's garland is not won by him who is merely strong. Are we foes? Well, then, I say that we are warring brothers.

THE PRIOR: I am not your brother. Have you not heard me say it? Let lights be brought, if the darkness weakens you. I hate this contemptible balancing, this lewd intellectuality, this blasphemous toleration of extremes! It shall not move me. Let them be still. I know it, this spirit—too well, too well! I put it behind me. I hear Florence, I hear your time—subtle, daring, easy-going—but it shall not weaken my powers, shall not disarm me, not me, not me—know that once and for all!

LORENZO: You hate the time, it understands you. Which is greater?

THE PRIOR (*savagely*): I am, I am!

LORENZO: Perhaps. You, then. I did not summon you to quarrel with you. And yet—forgive me: I would gladly see you at one with yourself. You rave at the spirit by which you rose to greatness, by which you let yourself be borne upwards—am I right? I cannot see your face. But this is how things seem to me: in times like these, such as you have said they are—subtle, sceptical, tolerant, inquisitive, vacillating, manifold, without clear limits—in such a time limitation can seem like genius. Forgive me. I am not fencing, I seek not to offend, I seek but clarity as between you and me. A power that resolutely holds itself aloof from the general scepticism can work wonders. All these subtle little people—they have no faith, do not believe it—they feel a power and they bow before it. Once more, forgive me! And again: you revile art, yet use it for your ends. Your name and fame are cried aloud because the city and our time worship the man who proudly dares to be himself. Never, anywhere, has there been such rich reward, so much response, for him who strives in his own way after fame. That you grew great in Florence was only because this Florence is so free, such a spoilt child of art, as to take you as her lord. Were it less so, were it only a very little less lapped in art, it would tear you to pieces instead of paying you homage. You are aware of that?

THE PRIOR: I will not be aware of it.

LORENZO: May one will not to be aware? You rail at the indifference, at the refusal to see, at the shamelessness. But are you not

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yourself ashamed to win such power, knowing by what means you win it?

THE PRIOR: I am chosen. I may know and still do it. For I must be strong. God performs miracles. You see the miracle of detachment regained. (*Looking at the bust of Cæsar*) Did he ask by what means he climbed?

LORENZO: Cæsar? You are a monk. And you have ambition!

THE PRIOR: How could I not have, I that suffered so? Ambition says. My sufferings must not have been in vain. They must bring me fame.

LORENZO: By God, that is it! Have I not known it? You have understood all that to a miracle. We rulers of men are egoist, and they blame us for it, not knowing that it comes of our suffering. They call us hard and understand not it was pain made us so. We may justly say. Look at yourselves, who have had so much easier a time on this earth. To myself I am torment and joy sufficient.

THE PRIOR: But they do not rail. They marvel. They reverence. See them come to the strong ego, the many who are only we, see them serve, see them tirelessly do his will.

LORENZO: Although his own advantage is plain to any eye.

THE PRIOR: Although he leave their services quite unrewarded and take them for granted—

LORENZO: Cosimo my forebear— I was old enough to know him; he was a cold and clever tyrant. They gave him the title *pater patriæ*. He took it with a smile and never a word of thanks. I shall never forget it. How he must despise them, I thought. And since then I have despised the folk.

THE PRIOR: Fame is the school of scorn.

LORENZO: Ah, the worthlessness of the masses! They are so poor, so empty, so selflessly self-forgetful.

THE PRIOR: So simple, so easy to dominate.

LORENZO: They know nothing better than to be dominated.

THE PRIOR: They write to me from all the quarters of the earth, they come from far to kiss the hem of my robe, they spread my fame to the four winds. Do I ever ask them for it, have I ever thanked them?

LORENZO: It is amazing.

THE PRIOR: Quite amazing is it. Are you so futile, one thinks, so vacant yourselves, that you know nothing prouder

than to serve another?

LORENZO: Just so, just so! One cannot believe one's eyes, to see them bowing low and willingly—so satisfied.

THE PRIOR: One might laugh at the docility of the world . . .

LORENZO: And laughing, laughing, one takes the world as willing instrument on which to play.

THE PRIOR: To play one's own tune

LORENZO (*feverishly*): Oh, my dreams! My power and art! Florence was my lyre. Did it not resound? Sweetly? It sang of my longing. It sang of beauty, it sang of great desire, it sang, it sang the great song of life. . . . Hush! On your knees. . . . There! I see her. She comes, she draws near to me, all the veils fall and all my blood flows out to meet her naked beauty. Oh, joy! Oh, sweet and fearful thrill! Am I chosen to look upon you, Venus Genetrix, you who are life, the sweet world? . . . Creative beauty, mighty impulse of art! Venus Fiorenza! Dost thou know what I would? The perpetual feast—that was my sovereign will! . . . Oh, stay! Dost thou turn away? Dost pale? I see no more. . . . Red waves come . . . and a horror . . . a yawning abyss. (*Fainting*) Are you still there, by whom I have understood myself? Speak to me! Fear! Anguish! Volterra! Blood! I emptied the treasury of the dowries, I drove the virgins to unchastity. . . . Speak quickly. Speak quickly. The conditions of grace. . . .?

THE PRIOR (*beside him, low, eagerly*): *Misericordiam volo*. . . . There are three. The first, repentance.

LORENZO (*in the same tone*): I will repent the plundering of Volterra and the theft of moneys. . . .

THE PRIOR: The second: That you return all unjustly owned property to the state.

LORENZO: My son shall do so. Then?

THE PRIOR (*in an awesome whisper, with a gesture of command*): The third: That you make Florence free—at once for ever—free from the lordship of your house.

LORENZO (*as softly; there is a silent, passionate struggle between the two*): Free—for you!

THE PRIOR: Free for the King who died on the Cross.

LORENZO: For you. For you! Why do you lie? We understood each other. Fiorenza, my city! Do you love her, then? Say quickly. You love her?

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THE PRIOR: Fool! Child! Lay yourself to bed in the grave with the ideas which are your playthings. A torrential love, a hate all-embracingly sweet—I am this complex, and this complex wills that I be lord in Florence!

LORENZO: Unhappy one—to what end? What can be your purpose?

THE PRIOR: Eternal peace. The triumph of the spirit. I will break them, these great wings—

LORENZO (*anguished, desperate*): You shall not. Wretch! You shall not. I forbid you—I, the Magnifico. Oh, I know you now, you have betrayed yourself to me. It is the wings of life you mean. It is death whom you proclaim as spirit, and all the life of life is art. I will prevent you. I am still master.

THE PRIOR: I laugh at you. You are dying, I am on my feet. My art won the people. Florence is mine.

LORENZO (*in a paroxysm*): Ah, monster! Evil spirit! Then you shall see me strong and ruthless. (*He shrieks, pulling himself up in the chair by both hands on the arms*) To me, to me! Come, come! Seize him! Bind him! He will break the great wings. Dungeon and chains! The lions' den! Kill him, he would slay all! Florence is mine . . . Florence . . . Florence! (*He collapses, his head rolls upon his neck. His eyeballs turn in, his arms describe a last all-embracing motion. Several servants with wax torches come from the right along the gallery into the room. The stage is suddenly full of flickering light. Pico, Ficino, Poliziano, Pulci, Pierleoni, and the artists hasten in horror down the steps.*)

PICO: Lorenzo!

PIERLEONI: He is gone.

POLIZIANO (*in despair*): My Lauro, my Lauro!

(*A new movement in the gallery. Four or five men, dust-covered, make their way hastily in.*)

ONE OF THEM: Hear ye, hear ye! We are sent by the high and noble Signoria. The city is in an uproar. It is reported that the Prophet Girolamo has been betrayed, taken, murdered. The populace are on their way to Careggi. They demand to see the Frate.

THE PRIOR (*looking down at the body of his foe*): Here am I.

FIORÉ (*appearing like a vision in the torchlight, at the top of the steps*): Monk, do you hear me?

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THE PRIOR (*stiffly upright, without turning round*): I hear. FIORE. Then hear this: Descend! The fire you have fanned will consume you, you yourself, to purify you and the world of you. Shudder before it - and descend. Cease to will, instead of willing nothingness. Void the power! Renounce! Be a monk!

THE PRIOR: I love the fire.

(*He turns. They make way. A lane opens for him, timidly. He strides slowly through it in the torchlight, upwards, away, into his destiny.*)

A WEARY HOUR

HE GOT up from the table, his little, fragile writing-desk; got up as though desperate, and with hanging head crossed the room to the tall, thin, pillar-like stove in the opposite corner. He put his hands to it; but the hour was long past midnight and the tiles were nearly stone-cold. Not getting even this little comfort that he sought, he leaned his back against them and, coughing, drew together the folds of his dressing-gown, between which a dragged lace shirt-frill stuck out; he snuffed hard through his nostrils to get a little air, for as usual he had a cold.

It was a particular, a sinister cold, which scarcely ever quite disappeared. It inflamed his eyelids and made the flanges of his nose all raw; in his head and limbs it lay like a heavy, sombre intoxication. Or was this cur- I confinement to his room, to which the doctor had weeks ago condemned him, to blame for all his languor and flabbiness? God knew it it was the right thing—perhaps so, on account of his chronic catarrh and the spasms in his chest and belly. And for weeks on end now, yes, weeks, bad weather had reigned in Jena—hateful, horrible weather, which he felt in every nerve of his body—cold, wild, gloomy. The December wind roared in the stove-pipe with a desolate god-forsaken sound—he might have been wandering on a heath, by night and storm, his soul full of unappeasable grief. Yet this close confinement—that was not good either; no; good for thought, nor for the rhythm of the blood, where thought was engendered.

The six-sided room was bare and colourless and devoid of cheer: a whitewashed ceiling wreathed in tobacco smoke, walls covered with trellis-patterned paper and hung with silhouettes in oval

frames, half a dozen slender-legged pieces of furniture; the whole lighted by two candles burning at the head of the manuscript on the writing-table. Red curtains draped the upper part of the window-frames; mere festooned wisps of cotton they were, but red, a warm, sonorous red, and he loved them and would not have parted from them; they gave a little air of ease and charm to the bald unlovely poverty of his surroundings. He stood by the stoye and blinked repeatedly, straining his eyes across at the work from which he had just fled: that load, that weight, that gnawing conscience, that sea which to drink up, that frightful task which to perform, was all his pride and all his misery, at once his heaven and his hell. It dragged, it stuck, it would not budge—and now again . . . ! It must be the weather; or his catarrh, or his fatigue. Or was it the work? Was the thing itself an unfortunate conception, doomed from its beginning to despair?

He had risen in order to put a little space between him and his task, for physical distance would often result in improved perspective, a wider view of his material and a better chance of conspectus. Yes, the mere feeling of relief on turning away from the battlefield had been known to work like an inspiration. And a more innocent one than that purveyed by alcohol or strong, black coffee.

The little cup stood on the side-table. Perhaps it would help him out of the impasse? No, no, not again! Not the doctor only, but somebody else too, a more important somebody, had cautioned him against that sort of thing—another person, who lived over in Weimar and for whom he felt a love which was a mixture of hostility and yearning. That was a wise man. He knew how to live and create; did not abuse himself; was full of self-regard.

Quiet reigned in the house. There was only the wind, driving down the Schlossgasse and dashing the rain in gusts against the panes. They were all asleep—the landlord and his family, Lotte and the children. And here he stood by the cold stove, awake, alone, tormented; blinking across at the work in which his morbid self-dissatisfaction would not let him believe.

His neck rose long and white out of his stock and his knock-kneed legs showed between the skirts of his dressing-gown. The red hair was smoothed back from a thin, high forehead; it retreated in bays from his veined white temples and hung down in thin

locks over the ears. His nose was aquiline, with an abrupt whitish tip; above it the well-marked line of the brows almost met. They were darker than his hair and gave the deep-set, inflamed eyes a tragic, staring look. He could not breathe through his nose; so he opened his thin lips and made the freckled, sickly cheeks look even more sunken thereby.

No, it was a failure, it was all hopelessly wrong. The army ought to have been brought in! The army was the root of the whole thing. But it was impossible to present it before the eyes of the audience—and was art powerful enough thus to enforce the imagination? Besides, his hero was no hero; he was contemptible, he was frigid. The situation was wrong, the language was wrong; it was a dry pedestrian lecture, good for a history class, but as drama absolutely hopeless!

Very good, then, it was over. A defeat. A failure. Bankruptcy. He would write to Körner, the good Körner, who believed in him, who clung with childlike faith to his genius. He would scoff, scold, beseech—this friend of his; would remind him of the *Carlos*, which likewise had issued out of doubts and pains and rewritings and after all the anguish turned out to be something really fine, a genuine masterpiece. But times were changed. Then he had been a man still capable of taking a strong, confident grip on a thing and giving it triumphant shape. Doubts and struggles? Yes. And ill he had been, perhaps more ill than now; a fugitive, oppressed and hungry, at odds with the world; humanly speaking, a beggar. But young, still young! Each time, however low he had sunk, his resilient spirit had leaped up anew; upon the hour of affliction had followed the feeling of triumphant self-confidence. That came no more, or hardly ever, now. There might be one night of glowing exaltation—when the fires of his genius lighted up an impassioned vision of all that he might do if only they burned on; but it had always to be paid for with a week of enervation and gloom. Faith in the future, his guiding star in times of stress, was dead. Here was the despairing truth: the years of need and nothingness, which he had thought of as the painful testing-time, turned out to have been the rich and fruitful ones; and now that a little happiness had fallen to his lot, now that he had ceased to be an intellectual freebooter and occupied a position of civic dignity, with office and honours, wife and children—now he was

exhausted, worn out. To give up, to own himself beaten—that was all there was left to do. He groaned; he pressed his hands to his eyes and dashed up and down the room like one possessed. What he had just thought was so frightful that he could not stand still on the spot where he had thought it. He sat down on a chair by the further wall and stared gloomily at the floor, his clasped hands hanging down between his knees.

His conscience . . . how loudly his conscience cried out! He had sinned, sinned against himself all these years, against the delicate instrument that was his body. Those youthful excesses, the nights without sleep, the days spent in close, smoke-laden air, straining his mind and heedless of his body; the narcotics with which he had spurred himself on—all that was now taking its revenge.

And if it did—then he would defy the gods, who decreed the guilt and then imposed the penalties. He had lived as he had to live, he had not had time to be wise, not time to be careful. Here in this place in his chest, when he breathed, coughed, yawned, always in the same spot came this pain, this piercing, stabbing, diabolical little warning; it never left him, since that time in Erfurt five years ago when he had catarrhal fever and inflammation of the lungs. What was it warning him of? Ah, he knew only too well what it meant—no matter how the doctor chose to put him off. He had not time to be wise and spare himself, no time to save his strength by submission to moral laws. What he wanted to do he must do soon, do quickly, do today.

And the moral laws? . . . Why was it that precisely sin, surrender to the harmful and the consuming, actually seemed to him more moral than any amount of wisdom and frigid self-discipline? Not that constituted morality: not the contemptible knack of keeping a good conscience—rather the struggle and compulsion, the passion and pain.

Pain . . . how his breast swelled at the word! He drew himself up and folded his arms; his gaze, beneath the close-set auburn brows, was kindled by the nobility of his suffering. No man was utterly wretched so long as he could still speak of his misery in high-sounding and noble words. One thing only was indispensable; the courage to call his life by large and fine names. Not to ascribe his sufferings to bad air and constipation; to be well enough

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to cherish emotions, to scorn and ignore the material. Just on this one point to be naive, though in all else sophisticated. To believe, to have strength to believe, in suffering. . . . But he *did* believe in it; so profoundly, so ardently, that nothing which came to pass with suffering could seem to him either useless or evil. His glance sought the manuscript, and his arms tightened across his chest. Talent itself — was that not suffering? And if the manuscript over there, his unhappy effort, made him suffer, was not that quite as it should be — a good sign, so to speak? His talents had never been of the copious, ebullient sort, were they to become so he would feel mistrustful. That only happened with beginners and bunglers, with the ignorant and easily satisfied, whose life was not shaped and disciplined by the possession of a gift. For a gift, my friends down there in the audience, a gift is not anything simple, not anything to play with, it is not mere ability. At bottom it is a compulsion, a critical knowledge of the ideal, a permanent dissatisfaction, which rises only through suffering to the height of its powers. And it is to the greatest, the most unsatisfied, that their gift is the sharpest scourge. Not to complain, not to boast; to think modestly — patiently of one's pain, and if not a day in the week, not even in hour, be free from it — what then? To make light and little of it all, of suffering and achievement alike — that was what made a man great.

He stood up, pulled out his snuff box and sniffed eagerly, then suddenly clasped his hands ' behind his back and strode so briskly through the room that the flames of the candles flickered in the draught. Greatness, distinction, world conquest and an imperishable name! To be happy and unknown, what was that by comparison? To be known — known and loved by all the world — ah, they might call that egotism, those who knew naught of the urge, naught of the sweetness of this dream! Everything out of the ordinary is egotistic, in proportion to its suffering. "Speak for yourselves," it says, "ye without mission on it is earth, ye whose life is so much easier than mine!" An ambition says "Shall my sufferings be vain? No, they must make me great!"

The nostrils of his great nose dilated, his gaze darted fiercely about the room. His right hand was thrust hard and far into the opening of his dressing gown, his left arm hung down, the fist clenched. A fugitive red played in the gaunt cheeks — a glow

thrown up from the fire of his artistic egoism: that passion for his own ego, which burnt unquenchably in his being's depths. Well he knew it, the secret intoxication of this love! Sometimes he needed only to contemplate his own hand, to be filled with the liveliest tenderness towards himself, in whose service he was bent on spending all the talent, all the art that he owned. And he was right so to do, there was nothing base about it. For deeper still than his egoism lay the knowledge that he was freely consuming and sacrificing himself in the service of a high ideal, not as a virtue, of course, but rather out of sheer necessity. And this was his ambition: that no one should be greater than he who had not also suffered more for the sake of the high ideal. No one. He stood still, his hand over his eyes, his body turned aside in a posture of shrinking and avoidance. For already the inevitable thought had stabbed him: the thought of that other man, that radiant being, so sense-endowed, so divinely unconscious, that man over there in Weimar, whom he loved and hated. And once more, as always, in deep disquiet, in feverish haste, there began working within him the inevitable sequence of his thoughts: he must assert and define his own nature, his own art, against that other's. Was that other greater? Wherein, then, and why? If he won, would he have sweated blood to do so? If he lost, would his downfall be a tragic sight? He was no hero, no; a god, perhaps. But it was easier to be a god than a hero. Yes, things were easier for him. He was wise, he was deft, he knew how to distinguish between knowing and creating; perhaps that was why he was so blithe and carefree, such an effortless and gushing spring! But if creation was divine, knowledge was heroic, and he who created in knowledge was hero as well as god.

The will to face difficulties. . . . Did anyone realize what discipline and self-control it cost him to shape a sentence or follow out a hard train of thought? For after all he was ignorant, undisciplined, a slow, dreamy enthusiast. One of Cæsar's letters was harder to write than the most effective scene—and was it not almost for that very reason higher? From the first rhythmical urge of the inward creative force towards matter, towards the material, towards casting in shape and form—from that to the thought, the image, the word, the line—what a struggle, what a Gethsemane! Everything that he wrote was a marvel of yearning

after form, shape, line, body; of yearning after the sunlit world of that other man who had only to open his godlike lips and straightway call the bright unshadowed things he saw by name!

And yet—and despite that other man. Where was there an artist, a poet, like himself? Who like him created out of nothing, out of his own breast? A poem was born as music in his soul, as pure, primitive essence, long before it put on a garment of metaphor from the visible world. History, philosophy, passion were no more than pretexts and vehicles for something which had little to do with them, but was at home in orphic depths. Words and conceptions were keys upon which his art played and made vibrate the hidden strings. No one realized. The good souls praised him, indeed, for the power of feeling with which he struck one note or another. And his favourite note, his final emotional appeal, the great bell upon which he sounded his summons to the highest feasts of the soul—many there were who responded to its sound. Freedom! But in all their exaltation, certainly he meant by the word both more and less than they did. Freedom—what was it? A self-respecting middle-class attitude towards thrones and princes? Surely not that. When one thinks of all that the spirit of man has dared to put into the word! Freedom from what? After all, from what? Perhaps, indeed, even from human happiness, that silken bond, that tender, sacred tie. . . .

From happiness. His lips quivered. It was as though his glance turned inward upon himself, lowly his face sank into his hands. . . . He stood by the bed in the next room, where the flowered curtains hung in motionless folds across the window, and the lamp shed a bluish light. He bent over the sweet head on the pillow . . . a ringlet of dark hair lay across her cheek, that had the paleness of pearl; the childlike lips were open in slumber. "My wife! Beloved, didst thou yield to my yearning and come to me to be my joy? And that thou art. . . Lie still and sleep; nay, lift not those sweet shadowy lashes and gaze up at me, as sometimes with thy great, dark, questioning, searching eyes. I love thee so! By God I swear it. It is only that sometimes I am tired out, struggling at my self-imposed task, and my feelings will not respond. And I must not be too utterly thine, never utterly happy in thee, for the sake of my mission."

He kissed her, drew away from her pleasant, slumbrous warmth,

looked about him, turned back to the outer room. The clock struck; it warned him that the night was already far spent; but likewise it seemed to be mildly marking the end of a weary hour. He drew a deep breath, his lips closed firmly; he went back and took up his pen. No, he must not brood, he was too far down for that. He must not descend into chaos; or at least he must not stop there. Rather out of chaos, which is fullness, he must draw up to the light whatever he found there fit and ripe for form. No brooding! Work! Define, eliminate, fashion, complete!

And complete it he did, that effort of a labouring hour. He brought it to an end, perhaps not to a good end, but in any case to an end. And being once finished, lo, it was also good. And from his soul, from music and idea, new works struggled upward to birth and, taking shape, gave out light and sound, ringing and shimmering, and giving hint of their infinite origin- as in a shell we hear the sighing of the sea whence it came.

THE BLOOD OF THE WALSUNGS

IT WAS seven minutes to twelve. Wendelin came into the first floor entrance-hall and sounded the gong. He straddled in his violet knee-breeches on a prayer-rug pale with age and belaboured with his drumstick the metal disk. The brazen din, savage and primitive out of all proportion to its purport, resounded through the drawing-rooms to left and right, the billiard-room, the library, the winter-garden, up and down through the house; it vibrated through the warm and even atmosphere, heavy with exotic perfume. At last the sound ceased, and for another seven minutes Wendelin went about his business while Florian in the dining-room gave the last touches to the table. But on the stroke of twelve the cannibalistic summons sounded a second time. And the family appeared.

Herr Aarenhold came in his little toddle out of the library where he had been busy with his old editions. He was continually acquiring old books, first editions in many languages, costly and crumbling trifles. Gently rubbing his hands he asked in his slightly plaintive way:

"Beckerath not here yet?"

"No, but he will be. Why shouldn't he? He will be saving a meal in a restaurant," answered Frau Aarenhold, coming noiselessly up the thick-carpeted stairs, on the landing of which stood a small, very ancient church organ.

Herr Aarenhold blinked. His wife was impossible. She was small, ugly, prematurely aged, and shrivelled as though by tropic suns. A necklace of brilliants rested upon her shrunken breast. She wore her hair in complicated twists and knots to form a lofty pile. in

which, somewhere on one side, sat a great jewelled brooch, adorned in its turn with a bunch of white aigrettes. Herr Aarenhold and the children had more than once, as diplomatically as possible, advised against this style of coiffure. But Frau Aarenhold clung stoutly to her own taste.

The children came: Kunz and Märit, Siegmund and Sieglinde. Kunz was in a braided uniform, a stunning tanned creature with curling lips and a killing scar. He was doing six weeks' service with his regiment of hussars. Märit made her appearance in an uncorseted garment. She was an ashen, austere blonde of twenty-eight, with a hooked nose, grey eyes like a falcon's, and a bitter, contemptuous mouth. She was studying law and went entirely her own way in life.

Siegmund and Sieglinde came last, hand in hand, from the second floor. They were twins, graceful as young fawns, and with immature figures despite their nineteen years. She wore a Florentine cinquecento frock of claret-coloured velvet, too heavy for her slight body. Siegmund had on a green jacket suit with a tie of raspberry shantung, patent-leather shoes on his narrow feet, and cuff-buttons set with small diamonds. He had a strong growth of black beard but kept it so close-shaven that his sallow face with the heavy gathered brows looked no less boyish than his figure. His head was covered with thick black locks parted far down on one side and growing low on his temples. Her dark brown hair was waved in long, smooth undulations over her ears, confined by a gold circlet. A large pearl—his gift—hung down upon her brow. Round one of his boyish wrists was a heavy gold chain—a gift from her. They were very like each other, with the same slightly drooping nose, the same full lips lying softly together, the same prominent cheek-bones and black, bright eyes. Likest of all were their long slim hands, his no more masculine than hers, save that they were slightly redder. And they went always hand in hand, heedless that the hands of both inclined to moisture.

The family stood about awhile in the lobby, scarcely speaking. Then Beckerath appeared. He was engaged to Sieglinde. Wendelin opened the door to him and as he entered in his black frock-coat he excused himself for his tardiness. He was a government official and came of a good family. He was short of stature, with a pointed beard and a very yellow complexion, like a canary. His manners

were punctilious. He began every sentence by drawing his breath in quickly through his mouth and pressing his chin on his chest.

He kissed Sieglinde's hand and said :

"And you must excuse me too, Sieglinde—it is so far from the Ministry to the Zoo—"

He was not allowed to say thou to her—she did not like it. She answered briskly :

"Very far. Supposing that, in consideration of the fact, you left your office a bit earlier."

Kunz seconded her, his black eyes narrowing to glittering cracks :

"It would no doubt have a most beneficial effect upon our household economy."

"Oh, well—business, you know what it is," von Beckerath said dully. He was thirty-five years old.

The brother and sister had spoken glibly and with point. They may have attacked out of a habitual inward posture of self-defence; perhaps they deliberately meant to wound—perhaps again their words were due to the sheer pleasure of turning a phrase. It would have been unreasonable to feel annoyed. They let his feeble answer pass, as though they found it in character; as though cleverness in him would have been out of place. They went to table; Herr Aarenhold led the way eager to let von Beckerath see that he was hungry.

They sat down, they unfolded their stiff table-napkins. The immense room was carpeted, the walls were covered with eighteenth-century panelling, and three electric lustres hung from the ceiling. The family table, with its seven places, was lost in the void. It was drawn up close to the large French window, beneath which a dainty little fountain spread its silver spray behind a low lattice. Outside was an extended view of the still wintry garden. Tapestries with pastoral scenes covered the upper part of the walls; they, like the panelling, had been part of the furnishings of a French château. The dining-chairs were low and soft and cushioned with tapestry. A tapering glass vase holding two orchids stood at each place, on the glistening, spotless, faultlessly ironed damask cloth. With careful, skinny hands Herr Aarenhold settled the pince-nez half-way down his nose and with a mistrustful air read the menu, three copies of which lay on the table. He suffered from a weakness of the solar plexus, that nerve centre which lies at the

pit of the stomach and may give rise to serious distress. He was obliged to be very careful what he ate.

There was bouillon with beef marrow, *sole au vin blanc*, pheasant, and pineapple.

Nothing else. It was a simple family meal. But it satisfied Herr Aarenhold. It was good, light, nourishing food. The soup was served: a dumb-waiter above the sideboard brought it noiselessly down from the kitchen and the servants handed it round, bending over assiduously, in a very passion of service. The tiny cups were of translucent porcelain, whitish morsels of marrow floated in the hot golden liquid.

Herr Aarenhold felt himself moved to expand a little in the comfortable warmth thus purveyed. He carried his napkin cautiously to his mouth and cast after a means of clothing his thought in words.

"Have another cup, Beckerath," said he. "A working-man has a right to his comforts and his pleasures. Do you really like to eat - really enjoy it, I mean? If not, so much the worse for you. To me every meal is a little celebration. Somebody said that life is pretty nice after all - being arranged so that we can eat four times a day. He's my man! But to do justice to the arrangement one has to preserve one's youthful receptivity- and not everybody can do that. We get old --well, we can't help it. But the thing is to keep things fresh and not get used to them. For instance," he went on putting a bit of marrow on a piece of roll and sprinkling salt on it, "you are about to change your estate, the plane on which you live is going to be a good deal elevated" (von Beckerath smiled), "and if you want to enjoy your new life, really enjoy it, consciously and artistically, you must take care never to get used to your new situation. Getting used to things is death. It is ennui. Don't live into it, don't let anything become a matter of course, preserve a childlike taste for the sweets of life. You see . . . for some years now I have been able to command some of the amenities of life" (von Beckerath smiled), "and yet I assure you, every morning that God lets me wake up I have a little thrill because my bed-cover is made of silk. That is what it is to be young. I know perfectly well how I did it; and yet I can look round me and feel like an enchanted prince."

The children exchanged looks, so openly that Herr Aarenhold

could not help seeing it; he became visibly embarrassed. He knew that they were united against him, that they despised him: for his origins, for the blood which flowered in his veins and through him in theirs; for the way he had earned his money; for his fads, which in their eyes were unbecoming: for his valetudinarianism, which they found equally annoying; for his weak and whimsical loquacity, which in their eyes traversed the bounds of good taste. He knew all this—and in a way conceded that they were right. But after all he had to assert his personality, he had to lead his own life; and above all he had to be able to talk about it. That was only fair—he had proved that it was worth talking about. He had been a worm, a louse if you like. But just his capacity to realize it so fully, with such vivid self-contempt, had become the ground of that persistent, painful, never-satisfied striving which had made him great. Herr Aarenhold had been born in a remote village in East Prussia, had married the daughter of a well-to-do tradesman, and by means of a bold and shrewd enterprise, of large-scale schemings which had as their object a new and productive coal-bed, he had diverted a large and inexhaustible stream of gold into his coffers.

The fish course came on. The servants hurried with it from the sideboard through the length of the room. They handed round with it a creamy sauce and poured out a Rhine wine that prickled on the tongue. The conversation turned to the approaching wedding.

It was very near, it was to take place in the following week. They talked about the dowry, about plans for the wedding journey to Spain. Actually it was only Herr Aarenhold who talked about them, supported by von Beckerath's polite acquiescence. Frau Aarenhold ate greedily, and as usual contributed nothing to the conversation save some rather pointless questions. Her speech was interlarded with guttural words and phrases from the dialect of her childhood days. Märta was full of silent opposition to the church ceremony which they planned to have; it affronted her highly enlightened convictions. Herr Aarenhold also was privately opposed to the ceremony. Von Beckerath was a Protestant and in Herr Aarenhold's view Protestant ceremonial was without any æsthetic value. It would be different if von Beckerath belonged to the Roman confession. Kunz said nothing, because when von Beckerath was present he always felt annoyed with his mother. And neither Siegmund nor Sieglinde displayed any interest. They

held each other's narrow hands between their chairs. Sometimes their gaze sought each other's, melting together in an understanding from which everybody else was shut out. Von Beckerath sat next to Sieglinde on the other side.

"Fifty hours," said Herr Aarenhold, "and you are in Madrid, if you like. That is progress. It took me sixty by the shortest way. I assume that you prefer the train to the sea route via Rotterdam?"

Von Beckerath hastily expressed his preference for the overland route.

"But you won't leave Paris out. Of course, you could go direct to Lyons. And Sieglinde knows Paris. But you should not neglect the opportunity . . . I leave it to you whether or not to stop before that. The choice of the place where the honeymoon begins should certainly be left to you."

Sieglinde turned her head, turned it for the first time towards her betrothed, quite openly and unembarrassed, careless of the lookers-on. For quite three seconds she bent upon the courteous face beside her the wide-eyed, questioning, expectant gaze of her sparkling black eyes—a gaze as vacant of thought as any animal's. Between their chairs she was holding the slender hand of her twin; and Siegmund drew his brows together till they formed two black folds at the base of his nose.

The conversation veered and tacked to and fro. They talked of a consignment of cigars which had just come by Herr Aarenhold's order from Havana, packed in zinc. Then it circled round a point of purely abstract interest, brought up by Kunz: namely, whether if *a* were the necessary and sufficient condition for *b*, *b* must also be the necessary and sufficient condition for *a*. They argued the matter, they analysed it with great ingenuity, they gave examples; they talked nineteen to the dozen, attacked each other with steely and abstract dialectic, and got no little heated. Märit had introduced a philosophical distinction, that between the actual and the causal principle. Kunz told her, with his nose in the air, that "casual principle" was a pleonasm. Märit, in some annoyance, insisted upon her terminology. Herr Aarenhold straightened himself, with a bit of bread between thumb and forefinger, and prepared to elucidate the whole matter. He suffered a complete rout, the children joined forces to laugh him down. Even his wife jeered

at him. "What are you talking about?" she said. "Where did you learn that—you didn't learn much!" Von Beckerath pressed his chin on his breast, opened his mouth, and drew in breath to speak—but they had already passed on, leaving him hanging.

Siegmund began, in a tone of ironic amusement, to speak of an acquaintance of his, a child of nature whose simplicity was such that he abode in ignorance of the difference between dress clothes and dinner jacket. This Parsifal actually talked about a checked dinner jacket. Kunz knew an even more pathetic case—a man who went out to tea in dinner clothes.

"Dinner clothes in the afternoon!" Sieglinde said, making a face. "It isn't even human!"

Von Beckerath laughed sedulously. But inwardly he was remembering that once he himself had worn a dinner coat before six o'clock. And with the game course they passed on to matters of more general cultural interest: to the plastic arts, of which von Beckerath was an amateur, to literature and the theatre, which in the Aarenhold house had the preference—though Siegmund did devote some of his leisure to painting.

The conversation was lively and general and the young people set the key. They talked well, their gestures were nervous and self-assured. They marched in the van of taste, the best was none too good for them. For the vision, the intention, the labouring will, they had no use at all; they ruthlessly insisted upon power achievement, success in the cruel trial of strength. The triumphant work of art they recognized—but they paid it no homage. Herr Aarenhold himself said to von Beckcrath;

"You are very indulgent, my dear fellow; you speak up for intentions—but results, results are what we are after! You say: 'Of course his work is not much good—but he was only a peasant before he took it up, so his performance is after all astonishing.' Nothing in it. Accomplishment is absolute, not relative. There are no mitigating circumstances. Let a man do first-class work or let him shovel coals. How far should I have got with a good-natured attitude like that? I might have said to myself: 'You're only a poor fish, originally—it's wonderful if you get to be the head of your office.' Well, I'd not be sitting here! I've had to force the world to recognize me, so now I won't recognize anything unless I am forced to!"

The children laughed. At that moment they did not look down on him. They sat there at table, in their low, luxuriously cushioned chairs, with their spoilt, dissatisfied faces. They sat in splendour and security, but their words rang as sharp as though sharpness, hardness, alertness, and pitiless clarity were demanded of them as survival values. Their highest praise was a grudging acceptance, their criticism deft and ruthless; it snatched the weapons from one's hand, it paralysed enthusiasm, made it a laughing-stock. "Very good," they would say of some masterpiece whose lofty intellectual plane would seem to have put it beyond the reach of critique. Passion was a blunder—it made them laugh. Von Beckerath, who tended to be disarmed by his enthusiasms, had hard work holding his own—also his age put him in the wrong. He got smaller and smaller in his chair, pressed his chin on his breast, and in his excitement breathed through his mouth—quite unhorsed by the brisk arrogance of youth. They contradicted everything—as though they found it impossible, discreditable, lamentable, not to contradict. They contradicted most efficiently, their eyes narrowing to gleaming cracks. They fell upon a single word of his, they worried it, they tore it to bits and replaced it by another so telling and deadly that it went straight to the mark and sat in the wound with quivering shaft. Towards the end of luncheon von Beckerath's eyes were red and he looked slightly deranged.

Suddenly— they were sprinkling sugar on their slices of pineapple—Siegmund said, wrinkling up his face in the way he had, as though the sun were making him blink :

"Oh, by the by, von Beckerath, something else, before we forget it. Sieglinde and I approach you with a request— metaphorically speaking, you see us on our knees. They are giving the *Walküre* tonight. We should like, Sieglinde and I, to hear it once more together—may we? We are of course aware that everything depends upon your gracious favour—"

"How thoughtful!" said Herr Aarenhold.

Kunz drummed the Hunding motif on the cloth.

Von Beckerath was overcome at anybody asking his permission about anything. He answered eagerly :

"But by all means, Siegmund—and you too, Sieglinde; I find your request very reasonable—do go, of course; in fact, I shall be able to go with you. There is an excellent cast tonight."

THE BLOOD OF THE WALSUNGS

All the Aarenholds bowed over their plates to hide their laughter. Von Beckerath blinked with his effort to be one of them, to understand and share their mirth.

Siegmund hastened to say :

"Oh, well, actually, it's a rather poor cast, you know. Of course, we are just as grateful to you as though it were good. But I am afraid there is a slight misunderstanding. Sieglinde and I were asking you to permit us to hear the *Walküre* once more *alone* together before the wedding. I don't know if you feel now that- -"

"Oh, certainly. I quite understand. How charming! Of course you must go!"

"Thanks, we are most grateful indeed. Then I will have Percy and Leiermann put in for us. . . ."

"Perhaps I may venture to remark," said Herr Aarenhold, "that your mother and I are driving to dinner with the Erlangers and using Percy and Leiermann. You will have to condescend to the brown coupé and Baal and Lamp." "

"And your box?" asked Kunz.

"I took it long ago," said Siegmund, tossing back his head.

They all laughed, all staring at the bridegroom.

Herr Aarenhold unfolded with his finger-tips the paper of a beudonna powder and shook it carefully into his mouth. Then he lighted a fat cigarette, which presently spread abroad a priceless fragrance. The servants sprang forward to draw away his and Frau Aarenhold's chairs. The order was given to serve coffee in the winter-garden. Kunz in a sharp voice ordered his dog-cart brought round; he would drive to the barracks.

Siegmund was dressing for the opera; he had been dressing for an hour. He had so abnormal and constant a need for purification that actually he spent a considerable part of his time before the wash-basin. He stood now in front of his large Empire mirror with the white enamelled frame; dipped a powder-puff in its embossed box and powdered his freshly shaven chin and cheeks. His beard was so strong that when he went out in the evening he was obliged to shave a second time.

He presented a colourful picture as he stood there, in rose-tinted silk drawers and socks, red morocco slippers, and a wadded house-jacket in a dark pattern with revers of grey fur. For background he had his large sleeping chamber, full of all sorts of elegant and

practical white-enamelled devices. Beyond the windows was a misty view over the tree-tops of the Tiergarten.

It was growing dark. He turned on the circular arrangement of electric bulbs in the white ceiling—they filled the room with soft milky light. Then he drew the velvet curtains across the darkening panes. The light was reflected from the liquid depths of the mirrors in wardrobe, washing-stand, and toilet-table, it flashed from the polished bottles on the tile-inlaid shelves. And Siegmund continued to work on himself. Now and then some thought in his mind would draw his brows together till they formed two black folds over the base of the nose.

His day had passed as his days usually did, vacantly and swiftly. The opera began at half past six and he had begun to change at half past five, so there had not been much afternoon. He had rested on his chaise-longue from two to three, then drunk tea and employed the remaining hour sprawled in a deep leather armchair in the study which he shared with Kunz, reading a few pages in each of several new novels. He had found them pitifully weak on the whole; but he had sent a few of them to the binder's to be artistically bound in choice bindings, for his library.

But in the forenoon he had worked. He had spent the hour from ten to eleven in the atelier of his professor, an artist of European repute, who was developing Siegmund's talent for drawing and painting, and receiving from Herr Aarenhold two thousand marks a month for his services. But what Siegmund painted was absurd. He knew it himself; he was far from having any glowing expectations on the score of his talent in this line. He was too shrewd not to know that the conditions of his existence were not the most favourable in the world for the development of a creative gift. The accoutrements of life were so rich and varied, so elaborated, that almost no place at all was left for life itself. Each and every single accessory was so costly and beautiful that it had an existence above and beyond the purpose it was meant to serve—until one's attention was first confused and then exhausted. Siegmund had been born into superfluity, he was perfectly adjusted to it. And yet it was the fact that this superfluity never ceased to thrill and occupy him, to give him constant pleasure. Whether consciously or not, it was with him as with his father, who practised the art of never getting used to anything.

Siegmund loved to read, he strove after the word and the spirit as after a tool which a profound instinct urged him to grasp. But never had he lost himself in a book as one does when that single work seems the most important in the world; unique, a little, all-embracing universe, into which one plunges and submerges oneself in order to draw nourishment out of every syllable. The books and magazines streamed in, he could buy them all, they heaped up about him and even while he read, the number of those still to be read disturbed him. But he had the books bound in stamped leather and labelled with Siegmund Aarenhold's beautiful book-plate; they stood in rows, weighing down his life like a possession which he did not succeed in subordinating to his personality.

The day was his, it was given to him as a gift with all its hours from sunrise to sunset; and yet Siegmund found in his heart that he had no time for a resolve, how much less then for a deed. He was no hero, he commanded no giant powers. The preparation, the lavish equipment for what should have been the serious business of life used up all his energy. How much mental effort had to be expended simply in making a proper toilette! How much time and attention went to his supplies of cigarettes, soaps, and perfumes; how much occasion for making up his mind lay in that moment, recurring two or three times daily, when he had to select his cravat! And it was worth the effort. It was important. The blond-haired citizenry of the land might go about in elastic-sided boots and turn-over collars, heedless of the effect. But he—and most explicitly he—must be unassailable and blameless of exterior from head to foot.

And in the end no one expected more of him. Sometimes there came moments when he had a feeble misgiving about the nature of the "actual"; sometimes he felt that this lack of expectation lamed and dislodged his sense of it. . . . The household arrangements were all made to the end that the day might pass quickly and no empty hour be perceived. The next mealtime always came promptly on. They dined before seven; the evening when one can idle with a good conscience, was long. The days disappeared, swiftly the seasons came and went. The family spent two summer months at their little castle on the lake, with its large and splendid grounds and many tennis courts, its cool paths through the parks, and shaven lawns adorned by bronze statuettes. A third month was

spent in the mountains, in hotels where life was even more expensive than at home. Of late, during the winter, he had had himself driven to school to listen to a course of lectures in the history of art which came at a convenient time. But he had had to leave off because his sense of smell indicated that the rest of the class did not wash often enough.

He spent the hour walking with Sieglinde instead. Always she had been at his side since the very first; she had clung to him since they lisped their first syllables, taken their first steps. He had no friends, never had had one but this, his exquisitely groomed, darkly beautiful counterpart, whose moist and slender hand he held while the richly gilded, empty-eyed hours slipped past. They took fresh flowers with them on their walks, a bunch of violets or lilies of the valley, smelling them in turn or sometimes both together, with languid yet voluptuous abandon. They were like self-centred invalids who absorb themselves in trifles, as narcotics to console them for the loss of hope. With an inward gesture of renunciation they doffed aside the evil-smelling world and loved each other alone, for the priceless sake of their own rare uselessness. But all that they uttered was pointed, neat, and brilliant; it hit off the people they met, the things they saw, everything done by somebody else to the end that it might be exposed to the unerring eye, the sharp tongue, the witty condemnation.

Then von Beckerath had appeared. He had a post in the government and came of a good family. He had proposed for Sieglinde. Frau Aarenhold had supported him, Herr Aarenhold had displayed a benevolent neutrality, Kunz the hussar was his zealous partisan. He had been patient, assiduous, endlessly good-mannered and tactful. And in the end, after she had told him often enough that she did not love him, Sieglinde had begun to look at him searchingly, expectantly, mutely, with her sparkling black eyes—a gaze as speaking and as vacant of thought as an animal's—and had said yes. And Siegmund, whose will was her law, had taken up a position too; slightly to his own disgust he had not opposed the match; was not von Beckerath in the government and a man of good family too? Sometimes he wrinkled his brows over his toilette until they made two heavy black folds at the base of his nose.

He stood on the white bearskin which stretched out its claws beside the bed; his feet were lost in the long soft hair. He sprinkled

himself lavishly with toilet water and took up his dress shirt. The starched and shining linen glided over his yellowish torso, which was as lean as a young boy's and yet shaggy with black hair. He arrayed himself further in black silk drawers, black silk socks, and heavy black silk garters with silver buckles, put on the well-pressed trousers of silky black cloth, fastened the white silk braces over his narrow shoulders, and with one foot on a stool began to button his shoes. There was a knock on the door.

"May I come in, Gigi?" asked Sieglinde.

"Yes, come in," he answered.

She was already dressed, in a frock of shimmering sea-green silk, with a square neck outlined by a wide band of beige embroidery. Two embroidered peacocks facing each other above the girdle held a garland in their beaks. Her dark brown hair was unadorned; but a large egg-shaped precious stone hung on a thin pearl chain against her bare skin, the colour of smoked meerschaum. Over her arm she carried a scarf heavily worked with silver.

"I am unable to conceal from you," she said, "that the carriage is waiting." He parried at once:

"And I have no hesitation in replying that it will have to wait patiently two minutes more." It was at least ten. She sat down on the white velvet chaise-longue and watched him at his labours.

Out of a rich chaos of ties he selected a white piqué band and began to tie it before the glass.

"Beckerath," said she, "wears coloured cravats, crossed over the way they wore them last year."

"Beckerath," said he, "is the most trivial existence I have ever had under my personal observation." Turning to her quickly he added: "Moreover, you will do me the favour of not mentioning that German's name to me again this evening."

She gave a short laugh and replied: "You may be sure it will not be a hardship."

He put on the low-cut piqué waistcoat and drew his dress coat over it, the white silk lining caressing his hands as they passed through the sleeves.

"Let me see which buttons you chose," said Sieglinde. They were the amethyst ones; shirt-studs, cuff-links, and waistcoat buttons, a complete set.

She looked at him admiringly, proudly, adoringly, with a world

of tenderness in her dark, shining eyes. He kissed the lips lying so softly on each other. They spent another minute on the chaise-longue in mutual caresses.

"Quite, quite soft you are again," said she, stroking his shaven cheeks.

"Your little arm feels like satin," said he, running his hand down her tender forearm. He breathed in the violet odour of her hair.

She kissed him on his closed eyelids; he kissed her on the throat where the pendant hung. They kissed one another's hands. They loved one another sweetly, sensually, for sheer mutual delight in their own well-groomed, pampered, expensive smell. They played together like puppies, biting each other with their lips. Then he got up.

"We mustn't be too late today," said he. He turned the top of the perfume bottle upside down on his handkerchief one last time, rubbed a drop into his narrow red hands, took his gloves, and declared himself ready to go.

He put out the light and they went along the red-carpeted corridor hung with dark old oil paintings and down the steps past the little organ. In the vestibule on the ground floor Wendelin was waiting with their coats, very tall in his long yellow paletot. They yielded their shoulders to his ministrations; Sieglinde's dark head was half lost in her collar of silver fox. Followed by the servant they passed through the stone-paved vestibule into the outer air. It was mild, and there were great ragged flakes of snow in the pearly air. The coupé awaited them. The coachman bent down with his hand to his cockaded hat while Wendelin ushered the brother and sister to their seats; then the door banged shut, he swung himself up to the box, and the carriage was at once in swift motion. It crackled over the gravel, glided through the high, wide gate, curved smoothly to the right, and rolled away.

The luxurious little space in which they sat was pervaded by a gentle warmth. "Shall I shut us in?" Siegmund asked. She nodded and he drew the brown silk curtains across the polished panes.

They were in the city's heart. Lights flew past behind the curtains. Their horses' hoofs rhythmically beat the ground, the carriage swayed noiselessly over the pavement, and round them roared and shrieked and thundered the machinery of urban life. Quite safe and shut away they sat among the wadded brown silk cushions,

hand in hand. The carriage drew up and stopped. Wendelin was at the door to help them out. A little group of grey-faced shivering folk stood in the brilliance of the arc-lights and followed them with hostile glances as they passed through the lobby. It was already late, they were the last. They mounted the staircase, threw their cloaks over Wendelin's arms, paused a second before a high mirror, then went through the little door into their box. They were greeted by the last sounds before the hush—voices and the slamming of seats. The lackey pushed their plush-upholstered chairs beneath them; at that moment the lights went down and below their box the orchestra broke into the wild pulsating notes of the prelude.

Night, and tempest. . . . And they, who had been wafted hither on the wings of ease, with no petty annoyances on the way, were in exactly the right mood and could give all their attention at once. Storm, a raging tempest, without in the wood. The angry god's command resounded, once, twice repeated in its wrath, obediently the thunder crashed. The curtain flew up as though blown by the storm. There was the rude hall, dark save for a glow on the pagan hearth. In the centre towered up the trunk of the ash tree. Siegmund appeared in the doorway and leaned against the wooden post beaten and harried by the storm. Draggingly he moved forwards on his sturdy legs wrapped round with hide and thongs. He was rosy-skinned, with a straw-coloured beard; beneath his blond brows and the blond forelock of his wig his blue eyes were directed upon the conductor, with an imploring gaze. At last the orchestra gave way to his voice, which rang clear and metallic, though he tried to make it sound like a gasp. He sang a few bars, to the effect that no matter to whom the hearth belonged he must rest upon it; and at the last word he let himself drop heavily on the bearskin rug and lay there with his head cushioned on his plump arms. His breast heaved in slumber. A minute passed, filled with the singing, speaking flow of the music, rolling its waves at the feet of the events on the stage. . . . Sieglinde entered from the left. She had an alabaster bosom which rose and fell marvellously beneath her muslin robe and deerskin mantle. She displayed surprise at sight of the strange man; pressed her chin upon her breast until it was double, put her lips in position and expressed it, this surprise, in tones which swelled soft and warm from her white throat and were given shape by her tongue and her mobile lips. She tended

the stranger; bending over him so that he could see the white flower of her bosom rising from the rough skins, she gave him with both hands the drinking-horn. He drank. The music spoke movingly to him of cool refreshment and cherishing care. They looked at each other with the beginning of enchantment, a first dim recognition, standing rapt while the orchestra interpreted in a melody of profound enchantment.

She gave him mead, first touching the horn with her lips, then watching while he took a long draught. Again their glances met and mingled, while below, the melody voiced their yearning. Then he rose, in deep dejection, turning away painfully, his arms hanging at his sides, to the door, that he might remove from her sight his affliction, his loneliness, his persecuted, hated existence and bear it back into the wild. She called upon him but he did not hear, heedless of self she lifted up her arms and confessed her intolerable anguish. He stopped. Her eyes fell. Below them the music spoke darkly of the bond of suffering that united them. He stayed. He folded his arms and remained by the hearth, awaiting his destiny.

Announced by his pugnacious motif, Hunding entered, paunchy and knock-kneed, like a cow. His beard was black with brown tufts. He stood there frowning, leaning heavily on his spear, and staring ox-eyed at the stranger guest. But as the primitive custom would have it he bade him welcome in an enormous, rusty voice.

Sieglinde hid the evening mist, Hunding's slow, suspicious gaze moving to and fro between her and the stranger. Dull-lout though he was he saw their likeness—the selfsame breed, that odd, untrammelled rebellious stock, which he hated, to which he felt inferior. They sat down, and Hunding, in two words, introduced himself and accounted for his simple, regular, and orthodox existence. Thus he forced Siegmund to speak of himself—and that was incomparably more difficult. Yet Siegmund spoke, he sang clearly and with wonderful beauty of his life and misfortunes. He told how he had been born with a twin sister—and as people do who dare not speak out, he called himself by a false name. He gave a moving account of the hatred and envy which had been the bane of his life and his strange father's life, how their hall had been burnt, his sister carried off, how they had led in the forest a horrid, persecuted, outlawed life, and how finally he had mysteriously lost

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his father as well. . . . And then Siegmund sang the most painful thing of all: he told of his yearning for human beings, his longing and ceaseless loneliness. He sang of men and women, of friendship and love he had sometimes won, only to be thrust back again into the dark. A curse had lain upon him for ever, he was marked by the brand of his strange origins. His speech had not been as others' speech nor theirs as his. What he found good was vexation to them, he was galled by the ancient laws to which they paid honour. Always and everywhere he had lived amid anger and strife, he had borne the yoke of scorn and hatred and contempt—all because he was strange, of a breed and kind hopelessly different from them.

Hunding's reception of all this was entirely characteristic. His reply showed no sympathy and no understanding, but only a sour disgust and suspicion of all Siegmund's story. And finally understanding that the stranger standing here on his own hearth was the very man for whom the hunt had been called up today, he behaved with the four-square pedantry one would have expected of him. With a grim sort of courtesy he declared that for tonight the guest-right protected the fugitive; tomorrow he would have the honour of slaying him in battle. Gruffly he commanded Sieglinde to spice his night-drink for him and to await him in bed within; then after a few more threats he followed her, taking all his weapons with him and leaving Siegmund alone and despairing by the hearth.

Up in the box Siegmund bent over the velvet ledge and leaned his dark boyish head on his narrow red hand. His brows made two black furrows, and one foot, resting on the heel of his patent-leather shoe, was in constant nervous motion. But it stopped as he heard a whisper close to him.

"Gigi!"

His mouth, as he turned, had an insolent line.

Sieglinde was holding out to him a mother-of-pearl box with maraschino cherries.

"The brandy chocolates are underneath," she whispered. But he accepted only a cherry, and as he took it out of the waxed paper she said in his ear:

"She will come back to him again at once."

STORIES OF A LIFETIME

"I am not entirely unaware of the fact," he said, so loud that several heads were jerked angrily in his direction. . . . Down in the darkness big Siegmund was singing alone. From the depths of his heart he cried out for the sword—for a shining haft to swing on that day when there burst forth at last the bright flame of his anger and rage, which so long had smouldered deep in his heart. He saw the hilt glitter in the tree, saw the embers fade on the hearth, sank back in gloomy slumber—and started up in joyful amaze when Sieglinde glided back to him in the darkness.

Hunding slept like a stone, a deafened, drunken sleep. Together they rejoiced at the outwitting of the clod, they laughed, and their eyes had the same way of narrowing as they laughed. Then Sieglinde stole a look at the conductor, received her cue, and putting her lips in position sang a long recitative related the heart-breaking tale of how they had forced her, forsaken, strange and wild as she was, to give herself to the crude and savage Hunding and to count herself lucky in an honourable marriage which might bury her dark origins in oblivion. She sang too, sweetly and soothingly, of the strange old man in the hat and how he had driven the sword blade into the trunk of the ash tree, to await the coming of him who was destined to draw it out. Passionately she played in song that it might be he whom she meant, whom she knew and grievously longed for, the consoler of her sorrows, the friend who should be more than friend, the avenger of her shame, whom once she had lost, whom in her abasement she wept for, her brother in suffering, her saviour, her rescuer.

But at this point Siegmund flung about her his two rosy arms. He pressed her cheek against the pelt that covered his breast and, holding her so, sang above her head—sang out his exultation to the four winds in a silver trumpeting of sound. His breast glowed hot with the oath that bound him to his mate. All the yearning of his hunted life found assuagement in her, all that love which others had repulsed, when in conscious shame of his dark origins he forced it upon them—in her it found its home. She suffered shame as did he, dishonoured was she like to himself—and now, now their brother-and-sister love should be their revenge!

The storm whistled, a gust of wind burst open the door, a flood of white electric light poured into the hall. Divested of darkness they stood and sang their song of spring and spring's sister, love!

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Crouching on the bearskin they looked at each other in the white light, as they sang their duet of love. Their bare arms touched each others as they held each other by the temples and gazed into each other's eyes, and as they sang their mouths were very near. They compared their eyes, their foreheads, their voices—they were the same. The growing, urging recognition wrung from his breast his father's name; she called him by his: Siegmund! Siegmund! He freed the sword, he swung it above his head, and submerged in bliss she told him in song who she was: his twin sister, Sieglinde. In ravishment he stretched out his arms to her, his bride, she sank upon his breast—the curtain fell as the music swelled into a roaring, rushing, foaming whirlpool of passion—swirled and swirled and with one mighty throb stood still.

Rapturous applause. The lights went on. A thousand people got up, stretched unobtrusively as they clapped, then made ready to leave the hall, with heads still turned towards the stage, where the singers appeared before the curtain, like masks hung out in a row at a fair. Hunding too came out and smiled politely, despite all that had just been happening.

Siegmund pushed back his chair and stood up. He was hot; little red patches showed on his cheek-bones, above the lean sallown, shaven cheeks.

"For my part," said he, "what I want now is a breath of fresh air. Siegmund was pretty feeble, wasn't he?"

"Yes," answered Sieglinde, "and the orchestra saw fit to drag abominably in the Spring Song."

"Frightfully sentimental," said Siegmund, shrugging his narrow shoulders in his dress coat. "Are you coming out?" She lingered a moment, with her elbows on the ledge, still gazing at the stage. He looked at her as she rose and took up her silver scarf. Her soft, full lips were quivering.

They went into the foyer and mingled with the slow-moving throng, downstairs and up again, sometimes holding each other by the hand.

"I should enjoy an ice," said she, "if they were not in all probability uneatable."

"Don't think of it," said he. So they ate bonbons out of their box—maraschino cherries and chocolate beans filled with cognac.

The bell rang and they looked on contemptuously as the crowds

rushed back to their seats, blocking the corridors. They waited until all was quiet, regaining their places just as the lights went down again and silence and darkness fell soothingly upon the hall. There was another little ring, the conductor raised his arms and summoned up anew the wave of splendid sound.

Siegmund looked down into the orchestra. The sunken space stood out bright against the darkness of the listening house, hands fingered, arms drew the bows, cheeks puffed out—all these simple folk laboured zealously to bring to utterance the work of a master who suffered and created created the noble and simple visions enacted above on the stage. Creation? How did one create? Pain gnawed and burned in Siegmund's breast, a drawing anguish which yet was somehow sweet, a yearning whither, for what? It was all so dark, so shamefully unclear! Two thoughts, two words he had—creation, passion! His temples glowed and throbbed and it came to him as in a yearning vision that creation was born of passion and was reshaped anew as passion. He saw the pale, spent woman hanging on the breast of the fugitive to whom she gave herself—he saw her love and her destiny and knew that so life must be to be creative. He saw his own life, and knew its contradictions, its clear understanding and spirit voluptuousness, its splendid security and idle spite, its weakness and witlessness, its languid contempt, his life, so full of words, so void of acts, so full of cleverness, so empty of emotion—and he felt again the burning, the drawing anguish which yet was sweet—whither, and to what end? Creation? Experience? Passion?

The finale of the act came—the curtain fell. Light, applause, general exit. Sieglinde and Siegmund spent the interval as before. They scarcely spoke, as they walked hand in hand through the corridors and up and down the steps. She offered him cherries but he took no more. She looked at him, but withdrew her gaze as his rested upon her, walking rather constrained at his side and enduring his eye. Her childish shoulders under the silver web of her scarf looked like those of an Egyptian statue, a little too high and too square. Upon her cheeks burned the same fire he felt in his own.

Again they waited until the crowd had gone in and took their seats at the last possible moment. Storm and wind and driving cloud, wild, heathenish cries of exultation. Eight females, not exactly stars in appearance, eight untrammelled, laughing maidens

of the wild, were disporting themselves amid a rocky scene. Brünnhilde broke in upon their merriment with her fears. They skimmed away in terror before the approaching wrath of Wotan, leaving her alone to face him. The angry god nearly annihilated his daughter—but his wrath roared itself out, by degrees grew gentle and dispersed into a mild melancholy, on which note it ended. A noble prospect opened out, the scene was pervaded with epic and religious splendour. Brünnhilde slept. The god mounted the rocks. Great, full-bodied flames, rising, falling, and flickering, glowed all over the boards. The Walküre lay with her coat of mail and her shield on her mossy couch ringed round with fire and smoke, with leaping, dancing tongues, with the magic sleep-compelling fire-music. But she had saved Sieglinde, in whose womb there grew and waxed the seed of that hated unprized race, chosen of the gods, from which the twins had sprung, who had mingled their misfortunes and their afflictions in free and mutual bliss.

Siegmund and Sieglinde left their box; Wendelin was outside, towering in his yellow paletot and holding their cloaks for them to put on. Like a gigantic slave he followed the two dark, slender, fur-mantled, exotic creatures down the stairs to where the carriage waited and the pair of large finely glossy thoroughbreds tossed their proud heads in the winter night. Wendelin ushered the twins into their warm little silken-lined retreat, closed the door, and the coupé stood poised for yet a second, quivering slightly from the swing with which Wendelin agilely mounted the box. Then it glided swiftly away and left the theatre behind. Again they rolled noiselessly and easefully to the rhythmic beat of the horses' hoofs, over all the unevennesses of the road, sheltered from the shrill harshness of the bustling life through which they passed. They sat as silent and remote as they had sat in their opera-box facing the stage—almost, one might say, in the same atmosphere. Nothing was there which could alienate them from that extravagant and stormily passionate world which worked upon them with its magic power to draw them to itself.

The carriage stopped; they did not at once realize where they were, or that they had arrived before the door of their parents' house. Then Wendelin appeared at the window, and the porter came out of his lodge to open the door.

"Are my father and mother at home?" Siegmund asked, looking

over the porter's head and blinking as though he were staring into the sun.

No, they had not returned from dinner at the Erlangers'. Nor was Kunz at home; Märit too was out, no one knew where, for she went entirely her own way.

In the vestibule they paused to be divested of their wraps; then they went up the stairs and through the first-floor hall into the dining-room. Its immense and splendid spaces lay in darkness save at the upper end, where one lustre burned above a table and Florian waited to serve them. They moved noiselessly across the thick carpet, and Florian seated them in their softly upholstered chairs. Then a gesture from Siegmund dismissed him, they would dispense with his services.

The table was laid with a dish of fruit, a plate of sandwiches, and a jug of red wine. An electric tea-kettle hummed upon a great silver tray, with all appliances about it.

Siegmund ate a caviar sandwich and poured out wine into a slender glass where it glowed a dark ruby red. He drank in quick gulps, and grumblingly stated his opinion that red wine and caviar were a combination offensive to good taste. He drew out his case, jerkily selected a cigarette, and began to smoke, leaning back with his hands in his pockets, wrinkling up his face and twitching his cigarette from one corner of his mouth to the other. His strong growth of beard was already beginning to show again under the high cheek-bones; the two black folds stood out on the base of his nose.

Sieglinde had brewed the tea and added a drop of burgundy. She touched the fragile porcelain cup delicately with her full, soft lips and as she drank she looked across at Siegmund with her great humid black eyes.

She set down her cup and leaned her dark, sweet little head upon her slender hand. Her eyes rested full upon him, with such liquid, speechless eloquence that all she might have said could be nothing beside it.

"Won't you have any more to eat, Gigi?"

"One would not draw," said he, "from the fact that I am smoking, the conclusion that I intend to eat more."

"But you have had nothing but bonbons since tea. Take a peach, at least."

He shrugged his shoulders—or rather he wriggled them like a naughty child, in his dress coat.

"This is stupid. I am going upstairs. Good night."

He drank out his wine, tossed away his table-napkin, and lounged away, with his hands in his pockets, into the darkness at the other end of the room.

He went upstairs to his room, where he turned on the light—not much, only two or three bulbs, which made a wide white circle on the ceiling. Then he stood considering what to do next. The good-night had not been final; this was not how they were used to take leave of each other at the close of the day. She was sure to come to his room. He flung off his coat, put on his fur-trimmed house-jacket, and lighted another cigarette. He lay down on the chaise-longue; sat up again, tried another posture, with his cheek in the pillow; threw himself on his back again and so remained awhile, with his hands under his head.

The subtle, bitterish scent of the tobacco mingled with that of cosmetics, the soaps, and the toilet waters; their combined perfume hung in the tepid air of the room and Siegmund breathed it in with conscious pleasure, finding it sweeter than ever. Closing his eyes he surrendered to this atmosphere, as a man will console himself with some delicate pleasure of the senses for the extraordinary harshness of his lot.

Then suddenly he started up again, tossed away his cigarette and stood in front of the white wardrobe, which had long mirrors let into each of its three divisions. He moved very close to the middle one and eye to eye he studied himself, conned every feature of his face. Then he opened the two side wings and studied both profiles as well. Long he looked at each mark of his race: the slightly drooping nose, the full lips that rested so softly on each other; the high cheek-bones, the thick black, curling hair that grew far down on the temples and parted so decidedly on one side; finally the eyes under the knit brows, those large black eyes that glowed like fire and had an expression of weary sufferance.

In the mirror he saw the bearskin lying behind him, spreading out his claws beside the bed. He turned round, and there was tragic meaning in the dragging step that bore him towards it—until after a moment more of hesitation he lay down all its length and buried his head in his arm.

For a while he lay motionless, then propped his head on his elbows, with his cheeks resting on his slim reddish hands, and fell again into contemplation of his image opposite him in the mirror. There was a knock on the door. He started, reddened, and moved as though to get up—but sank back again, his head against his outstretched arm, and stopped there, silent.

Sieglinde entered. Her eyes searched the room, without finding him at once. Then with a start she saw him lying on the rug.

"Gigi, whatever are you doing there? Are you ill?" She ran to him, bending over with her hand on his forehead, stroking his hair as she repeated: "You are not ill?"

He shook his head, looking up at her under his brow as she continued to caress him.

She was half ready for bed, having come over in slippers from her dressing-room, which was opposite to his. Her loosened hair flowed down over her open white dressing-jacket; beneath the lace of her chemise Siegmund saw her little breasts, the colour of smoked meerschaum.

"You were so cross," she said. "It was beastly of you to go away like that. I thought I would not come. But then I did, because that was not a proper good-night at all. . . ."

"I was waiting for you," said he.

She was still standing bent over, and made a little moue which brought out markedly the facial characteristics of her race. Then, in her ordinary tone:

"Which does not prevent my present position from giving me a crick in the back."

He shook her off.

"Don't, don't— we must not talk like that—not that way, Sieglinde." His voice was strange, he himself noticed it. He felt parched with fever, his hands and feet were cold and clammy. She knelt beside him on the skin, her hand in his hair. He lifted himself a little to fling one arm round her neck and so looked at her, looked as he had just been looking at himself—at eyes and temples, brow and cheeks.

"You are just like me," said he, haltingly, and swallowed to moisten his dry throat. "Everything about you is just like me—and so—what you have—with Beckerath—the experience—is for me too. That makes things even, Sieglinde—and anyhow, after all,

it is, for that matter— it is a revenge, Sieglinde—”

He was seeking to clothe in reason what he was trying to say— yet his words sounded as though he uttered them out of some strange, rash, bewildered dream.

But to her it had no quality of strangeness. She did not blush at his half-spoken, turbid, wild imaginings; his words enveloped her senses like a mist, they drew her down whence they had come, to the borders of a kingdom she had never entered, though sometimes, since her betrothal, she had been carried thither in expectant dreams.

She kissed him on his closed eyelids; he kissed her on her throat, beneath the lace she wore. They kissed each other's hands. They loved each other with all the sweetness of the senses, each for the other's spoilt and costly well-being and delicious fragrance. They breathed it in, this fragrance, with languid and voluptuous abandon, like self-centred invalids, consoling themselves for the loss of hope. They forgot themselves in caresses, which took the upper hand, passing over into a tumult of passion, dying away into a sobbing. . . .

She sat there on the bearskin, with parted lips, supporting herself with one hand, and brushed the hair out of her eyes. He leaned back on his hands against the white dressing-chest, rocked to and fro on his hips, and gazed into the air.

“But Beckerath,” said she seeking to find some order in her thoughts, “Beckerath, Gigi . . . what about him, now?”

“Oh,” he said—and for a second the marks of his race stood out strong upon his face—“he ought to be grateful to us. His existence will be a little less trivial, from now on.”

RAILWAY ACCIDENT

TELL YOU a story? But I don't know any. Well, yes, after all, here is something I might tell.

Once, two years ago now it is, I was in a railway accident; all the details are clear in my memory.

It was not really a first-class one—no wholesale telescoping or “heaps of unidentifiable dead”—not that sort of thing. Still, it was a proper accident, with all the trimmings, and on top of that it was at night. Not everybody has been through one, so I will describe it the best I can.

I was on my way to Dresden, whither I had been invited by some friends of letters: it was a literary and artistic pilgrimage, in short, such as, from time to time, I undertake not unwillingly. You make appearances, you attend functions, you show yourself to admiring crowds—not for nothing is one a subject of William II. And certainly Dresden is beautiful, especially the Zwinger; and afterwards I intended to go for ten days or a fortnight to the White Hart to rest, and if, thanks to the treatments, the spirit should come upon me, I might do a little work as well. To this end I had put my manuscript at the bottom of my trunk, together with my notes—a good stout bundle done up in brown paper and tied with string in the Bavarian colours. I like to travel in comfort, especially when my expenses are paid. So I patronized the sleeping-cars, reserving a place days ahead in a first-class compartment. All was in order; nevertheless I was excited, as I always am on such occasions, for a journey is still an adventure to me, and where travelling is concerned I shall never manage to feel properly blasé. I perfectly well know that the night train for Dresden leaves the

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central station at Munich regularly every evening, and every morning is in Dresden. But when I am travelling with it, and linking my momentous destiny to its own, the matter assumes importance. I cannot rid myself of the notion that it is making a special trip today, just on my account, and the unreasoning and mistaken conviction sets up in me a deep and speechless unrest, which does not subside until all the formalities of departure are behind me—the packing, the drive in the loaded cab to the station, the arrival there, and the registration of luggage—and I can feel myself finally and securely bestowed. Then, indeed, a pleasing relaxation takes place, the mind turns to fresh concerns, the unknown unfolds itself beyond the expanse of window-pane, and I am consumed with joyful anticipations.

And so on this occasion. I had tipped my porter so liberally that he pulled his cap and gave me a pleasant journey; and I stood at the corridor window of my sleeping-car snoking my evening cigar and watching the bustle on the platform. There were whistlings and rumblings, hurrys and farewells, and the singsong of newspaper and refreshment vendors, and over all the great electric moons glowed through the mist of the October evening. Two stout fellows pulled a hand-cart of large trunks along the platform to the baggage car in front of the train. I easily identified, by certain unmistakable features, my own trunk; one among many there it lay, and at the bottom of it reposed my precious package. "There," thought I, "no need to worry, it is in good hands. Look at that guard with the leather cartridge-belt, the prodigious sergeant-major's moustache, and the inhospitable eye. Watch him rebuking the old woman in the threadbare black cape—for two pins she would have got into a second-class carriage. He is security, he is authority, he is our parent, he is the State. He is strict, not to say gruff, you would not care to mingle with him; but reliability is writ large upon his brow, and in his care your trunk reposes as in the bosom of Abraham."

A man was strolling up and down the platform in spats and a yellow autumn coat, with a dog on a leash. Never have I seen a handsomer dog: a small, stocky bull, smooth-coated, muscular, with black spots; as well groomed and amusing as the dogs one sees in circuses, who make the audience laugh by dashing round and round the ring with all the energy of their small bodies. This

dog had a silver collar, with a plaited leather leash. But all this was not surprising, considering his master, the gentleman in spats, who had beyond a doubt the noblest origins. He wore a monocle, which accentuated without distorting his general air; the defiant perch of his moustache bore out the proud and stubborn expression of his chin and the corners of his mouth. He addressed a question to the martial guard, who knew perfectly well with whom he was dealing and answered hand to cap. My gentleman strolled on, gratified with the impression he had made. He strutted in his spats, his gaze was cold, he regarded men and affairs with penetrating eye. Certainly he was far above feeling journey-proud; travel by train was no novelty to him. He was at home in life, without fear of authority or regulations; he was an authority himself—in short, a nob. I could not look at him enough. When he thought the time had come, he got into the train (the guard had just turned his back). He came along the corridor behind me, bumped into me, and did not apologize. What a man! But that was nothing to what followed. Without turning a hair he took his dog with him into the sleeping-compartment! Surely it was forbidden to do that. When should I presume to take a dog with me into a sleeping-compartment? But he did it, on the strength of his prescriptive rights as a nob, and shut the door behind him.

There came a whistle outside, the locomotive whistled in response, gently the train began to move. I stayed awhile by the window watching the hand-waving and the shifting lights. . . . I retired inside the carriage.

The sleeping-car was not very full, a compartment next to mine was empty and had not been got ready for the night; I decided to make myself comfortable there for an hour's peaceful reading. I fetched my book and settled in. The sofa had a silky salmon-pink covering, an ash-tray stood on the folding table, the light burned bright. I read and smoked.

The sleeping-car attendant entered in pursuance of his duties and asked for my ticker for the night. I delivered it into his grimy hands. He was polite but entirely official, did not even vouchsafe me a good-night as from one human being to another, but went out at once and knocked on the door of the next compartment. He would better have left it alone, for my gentleman of the spats was inside; and perhaps because he did not wish anyone to discover

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his dog, but possibly because he had really gone to bed, he got furious at anyone daring to disturb him. Above the rumbling of the train I heard his immediate and elemental burst of rage. "What do you want?" he roared. "Leave me alone, you swine." He said "swine". It was a lordly epithet, the epithet of a cavalry officer—it did my heart good to hear it. But the sleeping-car attendant must have resorted to diplomacy—of course he had to have the man's ticket—for just as I stepped into the corridor to get a better view the door of the compartment abruptly opened a little way and the ticket flew out into the attendant's face; yes, it was flung with violence straight in his face. He picked it up with both hands, and though he had got the corner of it in one eye, so that the tears came, he thanked the man, saluting and clicking his heels together. Quite overcome, I returned to my book.

I considered whether there was anything against my smoking another cigar and concluded that there was little or nothing. So I did it, rolling onward and reading; I felt full of contentment and good ideas. Time passed, it was ten o'clock, half past ten, all my fellow-travellers had gone to bed, at last I decided to follow them. I got up and went into my own compartment. A real little bedroom, most luxurious, with stamped leather wall hangings, clothes-hooks, a nickel-plated wash-basin. The lower berth was snowily prepared, the covers invitingly turned back. Oh, triumph of modern times! I thought. One lies in this bed as though at home, it rocks a little all night, and the result is that next morning one is in Dresden. I took my suitcase out of the rack to get ready for bed; I was holding it above my head, with my arms stretched up.

It was at this moment that the railway accident occurred. I remember it like yesterday.

We gave a jerk—but jerk is a poor word for it. It was a jerk of deliberately foul intent, a jerk with a horrid reverberating crash, and so violent that my suitcase leaped out of my hands I knew not whither, while I was flung forcibly with my shoulder against the wall. I had no time to stop and think. But now followed a frightful rocking of the carriage, and while that went on, one had plenty of leisure to be frightened. A railway carriage rocks going over switches or on sharp curves, that we know; but this rocking would not let me stand up, I was thrown from one wall to the other as the carriage careened. I had only one simple thought, but I thought

it with concentration, exclusively. I thought: "Something is the matter, something is the matter, something is *very much* the matter!" Just in those words. But later I thought: "Stop, stop, stop!" For I knew that it would be a great help if only the train could be brought to a halt. And lo, at this my unuttered but fervent behest, the train did stop.

Up to now a deathlike stillness had reigned in the carriage, but at this point found tongue. Shrill feminine screams mingled with deeper masculine cries of alarm. Next door someone was shouting "Help!" No doubt about it, this was the very same voice which, just previously, had uttered the lordly epithet—the voice of the man in spats, his very voice, though distorted by fear. "Help!" it cried; and just as I stepped into the corridor, where the passengers were collecting, he burst out of his compartment in a silk sleeping-suit and halted, looking wildly round him. "Great God!" he exclaimed, "Almighty God!" and then, as though to abase himself utterly, perhaps in hope to avert destruction, he added in a deprecating tone: "Dear God!" But suddenly he thought of something else, of trying to help himself. He threw himself upon the case on the wall where an axe and saw are kept for emergencies, and broke the glass with his fist. But finding that he could not release the tools at once, he abandoned them, buffeted his way through the crowd of passengers, so that the half-dressed women screamed afresh, and leaped out of the carriage.

All that was the work of a moment only. And then for the first time I began to feel the shock: in a certain weakness of the spine, a passing inability to swallow. The sleeping-car attendant, red-eyed, grimy-handed, had just come up; we all pressed round him; the women, with bare arms and shoulders, stood wringing their hands.

The train, he explained, had been derailed, we had run off the track. That, as it afterwards turned out, was not true. But behold, the man in his excitement had become voluble, he abandoned his official neutrality; events had loosened his tongue and he spoke to us in confidence, about his wife. "I told her today, I did. 'Wife,' I said, 'I feel in my bones somethin's goin' to happen.'" And sure enough, hadn't something happened? We all felt how right he had been. The carriage had begun to fill with smoke, a thick smudge; nobody knew where it came from, but we all thought it best to get

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out into the night.

That could only be done by quite a big jump from the footboard on to the line, for there was no platform, of course, and besides our carriage was canted a good deal towards the opposite side. But the ladies—they had hastily covered their nakedness—jumped in desperation and soon we were all standing there between the lines.

It was nearly dark, but from where we were we could see that no damage had been done at the rear of the train, though all the carriages stood at a slant. But farther forward—fifteen or twenty paces farther forward! Not for nothing had the jerk we felt made such a horrid crash. There lay a waste of wreckage; we could see the margins of it, with the little lights of the guards' lanterns flickering across and to and fro.

Excited people came towards us, bringing reports of the situation. We were close by a small station not far beyond Regensburg, and as a result of a defective point our express had run on to the wrong line, had crashed at full speed into a stationary freight train, hurling it out of the station, annihilating its rear carriages, and itself sustaining serious damage. The great express engine from Maffei's in Munich lay smashed up and done for. Price seventy thousand marks. And in the forward coaches, themselves lying almost on one side, many of the seats were telescoped. No, thank goodness, there were no lives lost. There was talk of an old woman having been "taken out", but nobody had seen her. At least, people had been thrown in all directions, children buried under luggage, the shock had been great. The baggage car was demolished. Demolished—the baggage car? Demolished.

There I stood.

A bareheaded official came running along the track. The station-master. He issued wild and tearful commands to the passengers, to make them behave themselves and get back into the coaches. But nobody took any notice of him, he had no cap and no self-control. Poor wretch! Probably the responsibility was his. Perhaps this was the end of his career, the wreck of his prospects. I could not ask him about the baggage car—it would have been tactless.

Another official came up—he limped up. I recognized him by the sergeant-major's moustache: it was the stern and vigilant guard of the early evening—our Father, the State. He limped along, bent

over with his hand on his knee, thinking about nothing else. "Oh, dear!" he said, "oh, dear, oh, dear me!" I asked him what was the matter. "I got stuck, sir, jammed me in the chest, I made my escape through the roof." This "made my escape through the roof" sounded like a newspaper report. Certainly the man would not have used the phrase in everyday life; he had experienced not so much an accident as a newspaper account of it—but what was that to me? He was in no state to give me news of my manuscript. So I accosted a young man who came up bustling and self-important from the waste of wreckage, and asked him about the heavy luggage.

"Well, sir, nobody can say anything as to that"—his tone implied that I ought to be grateful to have escaped unhurt. "Everything is all over the place. Women's shoes—" he said with a sweeping gesture to indicate the devastation, and wrinkled his nose. "When they start the clearing operations we shall see. . . . Women's shoes. . . ."

There I stood. All alone I stood there in the night and searched my heart. Clearing operations. Clearing operations were to be undertaken with my manuscript. Probably it was destroyed, then, torn up, demolished. My honeycomb, my spider-web, my nest, my earth, my pride and pain, my all, the best of me—what should I do if it were gone? I had no copy of what had been welded and forged, of what already was a living, speaking thing—to say nothing of my notes and drafts, all that I had saved and stored up and overheard and sweated over for years—my squirrel's hoard. What should I do? I inquired of my own soul and I knew that I should begin over again from the beginning. Yes, with animal patience, with the tenacity of a primitive creature the curious and complex product of whose little ingenuity and industry has been destroyed; after a moment of helpless bewilderment I should set to work again—and perhaps this time it would come easier!

But meanwhile a fire brigade had come up, their torches cast a red light over the wreck; when I went forward and looked for the baggage car, behold it was almost intact, the luggage quite unharmed. All the things that lay strewn about came out of the freight train: among the rest a quantity of balls of string—a perfect sea of string covered the ground far and wide.

A load was lifted from my heart. I mingled with the people who

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stood talking and fraternizing in misfortune—also showing off and being important. So much seemed clear, that the engine-driver had acted with great presence of mind. He had averted a great catastrophe by pulling the emergency brake at the last moment. Otherwise, it was said, there would have been a general smash and the whole train would have gone over the steep embankment on the left. Oh, praiseworthy engine-driver! He was not about, nobody had seen him, but his fame spread down the whole length of the train and we all lauded him in his absence. "That chap," said one man, and pointed with one hand somewhere off into the night, "that chap saved our lives." We all agreed.

But our train was standing on a track where it did not belong, and it behoved those in charge to guard it from behind so that another one did not run into it. Firemen perched on the rear carriage with torches of flaming pitch, and the excited young man who had given me such a fright with his "women's shoes" seized upon a torch too and began signalling with it, though no train was anywhere in sight.

Slowly and by degrees something like order was produced, the State our Father regained pose and presence. Steps had been taken, wires sent, presently a breakdown train from Regensburg steamed cautiously into the station and great gas flares with reflectors were set up about the wreck. We passengers were now turned off and told to go into the little station building to wait for our new conveyance. Laden with our hand luggage, some of the party with bandaged heads, we passed through a lane of inquisitive natives into the tiny waiting-room, where we herded together as best we could. And inside of an hour we were all stowed higgledy-piggledy into a special train.

I had my first-class ticket - my journey being paid for - but it availed me nothing, for everybody wanted to ride first and my carriage was more crowded than the others. But just as I found me a little niche, whom do I see diagonally opposite to me, huddled in the corner? My hero, the gentleman with the spats and the vocabulary of a cavalry officer. He did not have his dog, it had been taken away from him in defiance of his rights as a nob and now sat howling in a gloomy prison just behind the engine. His master, like myself, held a yellow ticket which was no good to him, and he was grumbling, he was trying to make head against this

communistic levelling of rank in the face of general misfortune. But another man answered him in a virtuous tone: "You ought to be thankful that you can sit down." And with a sour smile my gentleman resigned himself to the crazy situation.

And now who got in, supported by two firemen? A wee little old grandmother in a tattered black cape, the very same who in Munich would for two pins have got into a second-class carriage. "Is this the first class?" she kept asking. And when we made room and assured her that it was, she sank down with a "God be praised!" on to the plush cushions as though only now was she safe and sound.

By Hof it was already five o'clock and light. There we breakfasted; an express train picked me up and deposited me with my belongings, three hours late, in Dresden.

Well, that was the railway accident I went through. I suppose it had to happen once; but whatever mathematicians may say, I feel that I now have every chance of escaping another.

THE FIGHT BETWEEN JAPPE AND DO ESCOBAR

I WAS very much taken aback when Johnny Bishop told me that Jappe and Do Escobar were going to fight each other and that we must go and watch them do it.

It was in the summer holidays at Travemünde, on a sultry day with a slight land breeze and a flat sea ever so far away across the sands. We had been some three-quarters of an hour in the water and were lying on the hard sand under the props of the bathing-cabins - we two and Jürgen Brattström the shipowner's son. Johnny and Brattström were lying on their backs entirely naked; I felt more comfortable with my towel wrapped round my hips. Brattström asked me why I did it and I could not think of any sensible answer; so Johnny said with his winning smile that I was probably too big now to lie naked. I really was larger and more developed than Johnny and Brattström; also a little older, about thirteen; so I accepted Johnny's explanation in silence, although with a certain feeling of mortification. For in Johnny Bishop's presence you actually felt rather out of it if you were any less small, fine, and physically childlike than he, who was all these things in such a very high degree. He knew how to look up at you with his pretty, friendly blue eyes, which had a certain mocking smile in them too, with an expression that said: "What a great, gawky thing you are, to be sure!" The ideal of manliness and long trousers had no validity in his presence—and that at a time, not long after the war, when strength, courage, and every hardy virtue stood very high among us youth and all sorts of conduct were banned as effeminate. But Johnny, as a foreigner—or half-foreigner—was exempt from this atmosphere. He was a little like a woman who preserves her

youth and looks down on other women who are less successful at the feat. Besides he was far and away the best-dressed boy in town, distinctly aristocratic and elegant in his real English sailor suit with the linen collar, sailor's knot, laces, a silver whistle in his pocket, and an anchor on the sleeves that narrowed round his wrists. Anyone else would have been laughed at for that sort of thing—it would have been jeered at as “girls’ clothes”. But he wore them with such a disarming and confident air that he never suffered in the least.

He looked rather like a thin little cupid as he lay there, with his pretty, soft blond curls and his arms up over the narrow English head that rested on the sand. His father had been a German business man who had been naturalized in England and died some years since. His mother was English by blood, a long-featured lady with quiet, gentle ways, who had settled in our town with her two children, Johnny and a mischievous little girl just as pretty as he. She still wore black for her husband, and she was probably honouring his last wishes when she brought the children to grow up in Germany. Obviously they were in easy circumstances. She owned a spacious house outside the city and a villa at the sea and from time to time she travelled with Johnny and Sissie to more distant resorts. She did not move in society, although it would have been open to her. Whether on account of her mourning or perhaps because the horizon of our best families was too narrow for her, she herself led a retired life, but she managed that her children should have social intercourse. She invited other children to play with them and sent them to dancing and deportment lessons, thus quietly arranging that Johnny and Sissie should associate exclusively with the children of well-to-do families - of course not in pursuance of any well-defined principle, but just as a matter of course. Mrs. Bishop contributed, remotely, to my own education: it was from her I learned that to be well thought of by others no more is needed than to think well of yourself. Though deprived of its male head the little family showed none of the marks of neglect or disruption which often in such cases make people fight shy. Without further family connection, without title, tradition, influence, or public office, and living a life apart, Mrs. Bishop by no means lacked social security or pretensions. She was definitely accepted at her own valuation and the friendship of her children was much sought

after by their young contemporaries.

As for Jürgen Brattström, I may say in passing that his father had made his own money, achieved public office, and built for himself and his family the red sandstone house on the Burgfeld, next to Mrs. Bishop's. And that lady had quietly accepted his son as Johnny's playmate and let the two go to school together. Jürgen was a decent, phlegmatic, short-legged lad without any prominent characteristics. He had begun to do a little private business in licorice sticks.

As I said, I was extremely shocked when Johnny told me about the impending meeting between Jappe and Do Escobar which was to take place at twelve o'clock that day on the Leuchtenfeld. It was dead earnest—might have a serious outcome, for Jappe and Do Escobar were both stout and reckless fellows and had strong feelings about knightly honour. The issue might well be frightful. In my memory they still seem as tall and manly as they did then, though they could not have been more than fifteen at the time. Jappe came from the middle class of the city; he was not much looked after at home, he was already almost his own master, a combination of loafer and man about-town. Do Escobar was an exotic and bohemian foreigner, who did not even come regularly to school but only attended lectures now and then—an irregular but paradisaical existence! He lived *en pension* with some middle-class people and rejoiced in complete independence. Both were people who went late to bed, visited public-houses, strolled of evenings in the Broad Street, followed girls about, performed crazy "stunts"—in short, were regular blades. Although they did not live in the Kurhotel at Travemünde—where they would scarcely have been acceptable—but somewhere in the village, they frequented the Kurhaus and garden and were at home there as cosmopolitans. In the evening, especially on a Sunday, when I had long since been in my bed in one of the chalets and gone off to sleep to the pleasant sound of the Kurhaus band, they, and other members of the young generation—as I was aware—still sauntered up and down in the stream of tourists and guests, loitered in front of the long awning of the café, and sought and found grown-up entertainment. And here they had come to blows, goodness knows how and why. It is possible that they had only brushed against each other in passing and in the sensitiveness of their knightly honour had made

a fighting matter of the encounter. Johnny, who of course had been long since in bed too and was instructed only by hearsay in what happened, expressed himself in his pleasant, slightly husky childish voice, that the quarrel was probably about some "gal"—an easy assumption, considering Jappe's and Do Escobar's precocity and boldness. In short, they had made no scene among the guests, but in few and biting words agreed upon hour and place and witnesses for the satisfaction of their honour. The next day, at twelve, rendezvous at such and such a spot on the Leuchtenfeld. Good evening.—Ballet-master Knaak from Hamburg, master of ceremonies and leader of the Kurhaus cotillions, had been on the scene and promised his presence at the appointed hour and place.

Johnny rejoiced wholeheartedly in the fray— I think that neither he nor Brattström would have shared my apprehensions. Johnny repeatedly assured me, forming the *r* far forward on his palate, with his pretty enunciation, that they were both "in dead earnest" and certainly meant business. Complacently and with a rather ironic objectivity he weighed the chances of victory for each. They were both frightfully strong, he grinned; both of them great fighters —it would be fun to have it settled which of them was the greater. Jappe, Johnny thought, had a broad chest and capital arm and leg muscles, he could tell that from seeing him swimming. But Do Escobar was uncommonly wiry and savage—hard to tell beforehand who would get the upper hand. It was strange to hear Johnny discourse so sovereignly upon Jappe's and Do Escobar's qualifications, looking at his childish arms, which could never have given or warded off a blow. As for me, I was indeed far from absenting myself from the spectacle. That would have been absurd and moreover the proceedings had a great fascination for me. Of course I must go, I must see it all, now that I knew about it. I felt a certain sense of duty, along with other and conflicting emotions: a great shyness and shame, all unwarlike as I was, and not at all minded to trust myself upon the scene of manly exploits. I had a nervous dread of the shock which the sight of a duel *à outrance*, a fight for life and death, as it were, would give me. I was cowardly enough to ask myself whether, once on the field, I might not be caught up in the struggle and have to expose my own person to a proof of valour which I knew in my inmost heart I was far from being able

or willing to give. On the other hand I kept putting myself in Jappe's and Do Escobar's place and feeling consuming sensations which I assumed to be what they were feeling. I visualized the scene of the insult and the challenge, summoned my sense of good form and with Jappe and Do Escobar resisted the impulse to fall to there and then. I experienced the agony of an overwrought passion for justice, the flaring, shattering hatred, the attacks of raving impatience for revenge, in which they must have passed the night. Arrived at the last ditch, lost to all sense of fear, I fought myself blind and bloody with an adversary just as inhuman, drove my fist into his hated jaw with all the strength of my being, so that all his teeth were broken, received in exchange a brutal kick in the stomach and went under in a sea of blood. After which I woke in my bed with ice-bags, quieted nerves, and a chorus of mild reproaches from my family. In short, when it was half past twelve and we got up to dress I was half worn out with my apprehensions. In the cabin and afterwards when we were dressed and went outdoors, my heart throbbed exactly as though it was I myself who was to fight with Jappe or Do Escobar, in public and with all the rigours of the game.

I still remember how we took the narrow wooden bridge which ran diagonally up from the beach to the cabins. Of course we jumped, in order to make it sway as much as possible, so that we bounced as though on a spring-board. But once below we did not follow the board walk which led along the beach past the tents and the basket chairs; but held inland in the general direction of the Kurhaus but rather more leftwards. The sun brooded over the dunes and sucked a dry, hot odour from the sparse and withered vegetation, the reeds and thistles that stuck into our legs. There was no sound but the ceaseless humming of the blue-bottle flies which hung apparently motionless in the heavy warmth, suddenly to shift to another spot and begin afresh their sharp, monotonous whine. The cooling effect of the bath was long since spent. Brattström and I kept lifting our hats, he his Swedish sailor cap with the oilcloth visor, I my round Heligoland woollen bonnet—the so-called tam-o'-shanter—to wipe our brows. Johnny suffered little from heat, thanks to his slightness and also because his clothing was more elegantly adapted than ours to the summer day. In his light and comfortable sailor suit of striped washing material which

left bare his throat and legs, the blue, short-ribboned cap with English lettering on his pretty little head, the long slender feet in fine, almost heelless white leather shoes, he walked with mounting strides and somewhat bent knees between Brattström and me and sang with his charming accent "Little Fisher Maiden"—a ditty which was then the rage. He sang it with some vulgar variation in the words, such as boys like to invent. Curiously enough, in all his childishness he knew a good deal about various matters and was not at all too prudish to take them in his mouth. But always he would make a sanctimonious little face and say: "Fie! Who would sing such dirty songs?"—as though Brattström and I had been the ones to make indecent advances to the little fisher maiden.

I did not feel at all like singing, we were too near the fatal spot. The prickly grass of the dunes had changed to the sand and sea moss of a barren meadow; this was the Leuchtenfeld, so called after the yellow lighthouse towering up in the far distance. We soon found ourselves at our goal.

It was a warm, peaceful spot, where almost nobody ever came: protected from view by scrubby willow trees. On the free space among the bushes a crowd of youths lay or sat in a circle. They were almost all older than we and from various strata of society. We seemed to be the last spectators to arrive. Everybody was waiting for Knaak the dancing-master, who was needed in the capacity of neutral and umpire. Both Jappe and Do Escobar were there—I saw them at once. They were sitting far apart in the circle and pretending not to see each other. We greeted a few acquaintances with silent nods and squatted in our turn on the sun-warmed ground.

Some of the group were smoking. Both Jappe and Do Escobar held cigarettes in the corners of their mouths. Each kept one eye shut against the smoke and I instantly felt and knew that they were aware how grand it was to sit there and smoke before entering the ring. They were both dressed in grown-up clothes, but Do Escobar's were more gentlemanly than Jappe's. He wore yellow shoes with pointed toes, a light-grey summer suit, a rose-coloured shirt with cuffs, a coloured silk cravat, and a round, narrow-brimmed straw hat sitting far back on his head, so that his mop of shiny black hair showed on one side beneath it, in a big hummock. He kept raising his right hand to shake back the silver bangle

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he wore under his cuff. Jappe's appearance was distinctly less pretentious. His legs were encased in tight trousers of a lighter colour than his coat and waistcoat and fastened with straps under his waxed black boots. A checked cap covered his curly blond hair; in contrast to Do Escobar's jaunty headgear he wore it pulled down over his forehead. He sat with his arms clasped round one knee; you could see that he had on loose cuffs over his shirt-sleeves, also that his finger-nails were either cut too short or else that he indulged in the vice of biting them. Despite the smoking and the assumed nonchalance, the whole circle was serious and silent, restraint was in the air. The only one to make head against it was Do Escobar, who talked without stopping to his neighbours, in a loud, strained voice, rolling his *r*'s and blowing smoke out of his nose.

I was rather put off by his volubility; it inclined me, despite the bitten finger-nails, to side with Jappe, who at most addressed a word or two over his shoulder to his neighbour and for the rest gazed in apparent composure at the smoke of his cigarette.

Then came Herr Knaak—I can still see him, in his blue striped flannel morning suit, coming with winged tread from the direction of the Kurhaus and lifting his hat as he paused outside the circle. That he wanted to come I do not believe; I am convinced rather that he had made a virtue of necessity when he honoured the fight with his presence. And the necessity, the compulsion, was due to his equivocal position in the eyes of martially- and masculinely-minded youth. Dark-skinned and comely, plump, particularly in the region of the hips, he gave us dancing and deportment lessons in the wintertime—private, family lessons as well as public classes in the Casino, and in the summer he acted as bathing-master and social manager at Travemünde. He rocked on his hips and weaved in his walk, turning out his toes very much and setting them first on the ground as he stepped. His eyes had a vain expression, his speech was pleasant but affected, and his way of entering a room as though it were a stage—his extraordinary and fastidious mannerisms charmed all the female sex, while the masculine world, and especially critical youth, viewed him with suspicion. I have often pondered over the position of François Knaak in life and always I have found it strange and fantastic. He was of humble origins, his parents were poor, and his taste for the social graces

left him as it were hanging in the air—not a member of society, yet paid by it as a guardian and instructor of its conventions. Jappe and Do Escobar were his pupils too; not in private lessons, like Johnny, Brattström, and me, but in the public classes in the Casino. It was in these that Herr Knaak's character and position were most sharply criticized. We of the private classes were less austere. A fellow who taught you the proper deportment towards little girls, who was thrillingly reported to wear a corset, who picked up the edge of his frock-coat with his finger-tips, curtsied, cut capers, leaped suddenly into the air, where he twirled his toes before he came down again—what sort of chap was he, after all? These were the suspicions harboured by militant youth on the score of Herr Knaak's character and mode of life, and his exaggerated airs did nothing to allay them. Of course, he was a grown-up man (he was even, comically enough, said to have a wife and children in Hamburg); and his advantage in years and the fact that he was never seen except officially and in the dance-hall prevented him from being convicted and unmasked. Could he do gymnastics? Had he ever been able to? Had he courage? Had he parts? In short, could one accept him as an equal? He was never in a position to display the soldier characteristics which might have balanced his salon arts and made him a decent chap. So there were youths who made no bones of calling him straight out a coward and a jackanapes. All this he knew and therefore he was here today to manifest his interest in a good stand-up fight and to put himself on terms with the young, though in his official position he should not have countenanced such goings-on. I am convinced, however, that he was not comfortable—he knew he was treading on thin ice. Some of the audience looked coldly at him and he himself gazed uneasily round to see if anybody was coming.

He politely excused his late arrival, saying that he had been kept by a consultation with the management of the Kurhaus about the next Sunday's ball. "Are the combatants present?" he next inquired in official tones. "Then we can begin." Leaning on his stick with his feet crossed he gnawed his soft brown moustache with his under lip and made owl eyes to look like a connoisseur.

Jappe and Do Escobar stood up, threw away their cigarettes, and began to prepare for the fray. Do Escobar did it in a hurry, with impressive speed. He threw hat, coat, and waistcoat on the

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ground, unfastened tie, collar, and braces and added them to the pile. He even drew his rose-coloured shirt out of his trousers, pulled his arms briskly out of the sleeves, and stood up in a red and white striped undershirt which exposed the larger part of his yellow arms, already covered with a thick black fell. "At your service, sir," he said, with a rolling r, stepping into the middle of the ring, expanding his chest and throwing back his shoulders. He still wore the silver bangle.

Jappe was not ready yet. He turned his head, elevated his brows, and looked at Do Escobar's feet a moment with narrowed eyes—as much as to say: "Wait a bit—I'll get there too, even if I don't swagger so much." He was broader in the shoulder; but as he took his place beside Do Escobar he seemed nowhere near so fit or athletic. His legs in the tight strapped boots inclined to be knock-kneed and his fit-out was not impressive—grey braces over a yellowed white shirt with loose buttoned sleeves. By contrast Do Escobar's striped tricot and the black hair on his arms looked uncommonly grim and businesslike. Both were pale but it showed more in Jappe as he was otherwise blond and red-cheeked, with jolly, not-too-refined features including a rather turned-up nose with a saddle of freckles. Do Escobar's nose was short, straight, and drooping and there was a downy black growth on his full upper lip.

They stood with hanging arms almost breast to breast, and looked at one another darkly and haughtily in the region of the stomach. They obviously did not know how to begin—and how well I could understand that! A night and half a day had intervened since the unpleasantness. They had wanted to fly at each other's throats and had only been held in check by the rules of the game. But they had had time to cool off. To do to order, as it were, before an audience, by appointment, in cold blood, what they had wanted to do yesterday when the fit was on them—it was not the same thing at all. After all, they were not gladiators. They were civilized young men. And in possession of one's senses one has a certain reluctance to smash a sound human body with one's fists. So I thought, and so, very likely, it was.

But something had to be done, that honour might be satisfied, so each began to work the other up by hitting him contemptuously with the finger-tips on the breast, as though that would be enough

to finish him off. And, indeed, Jappe's face began to be distorted with anger—but just at that moment Do Escobar broke off the skirmish.

"Pardon," said he, taking two steps backwards and turning aside. He had to tighten the buckle at the back of his trousers, for he was narrow-hipped and in the absence of braces they had begun to slip. He took his position again almost at once, throwing out his chest and saying something in guttural and rattling Spanish, probably to the effect that he was again at Jappe's service. It was clear that he was inordinately vain.

The skirmishing with shoulders and buffeting with palms began again. Then unexpectedly there ensued a blind and raging hand-to-hand scuffle with the fists, which lasted three seconds and broke off without notice.

"Now they are warming up," said Johnny, sitting next to me with a dry grass in his mouth. "I'll wager Jappe beats him. Look how he keeps squinting over at us—Jappe keeps his mind on his job. Will you bet he won't give him a good hiding?"

They had now recoiled and stood, fists on hips, their chests heaving. Both had doubtless taken some punishment, for they both looked angry, sticking out their lips furiously as much as to say: "What do you mean by hurting me like that?" Jappe was red-eyed and Do Escobar showed his white teeth as they fell to again.

They were hitting out now with all their strength on shoulders, forearms, and breasts by turns and in quick succession. "That's nothing," Johnny said, with his charming accent. "They won't get anywhere that way, either of them. They must go at it under the chin, with an uppercut to the jaw. That does it." But meanwhile Do Escobar had caught both Jappe's arms with his left arm, pressed them as in a vice against his chest, and with his right went on pummelling Jappe's flanks.

There was great excitement. "No clinching!" several voices cried out, and people jumped up. Herr Knaak hastened between the combatants, in horror. "You are holding him fast, my dear friend. That is against all the rules." He separated them and again instructed Do Escobar in the regulations. Then he withdrew once more outside the ring.

Jappe was obviously in a fury. He was quite white, rubbing his side and looking at Do Escobar with a slow nod that boded no

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good. When the next round began, his face looked so grim that everybody expected him to deliver a decisive blow.

And actually as soon as contact had been renewed Jappe carried out a coup—he practised a feint which he had probably planned beforehand. A thrust with his left caused Do Escobar to protect his head; but as he did so Jappe's right hit him so hard in the stomach that he crumpled forwards and his face took on the colour of yellow wax.

"That went home," said Johnny. "That's where it hurts. Maybe now he will pull himself together and take things seriously, so as to pay it back." But the blow to the stomach had been too telling, Do Escobar's nerve was visibly shaken. It was clear he could not even clench his fists properly, and his eyes took on a glazed look. However, finding his muscles thus affected, his vanity counselled him to play the agile southron, dancing round the German bear and rendering him desperate by his own dexterity. He took tiny steps and made all sorts of useless passes, moving round Jappe in little circles and trying to assume an arrogant smile—which in his reduced condition struck me as really heroic. But it did not upset Jappe at all—he simply turned round on his heel and got in many a good blow with his right while with his left he warded off Do Escobar's feeble attack. But what sealed Do Escobar's fate was that his trousers kept slipping. His tricot shirt even came outside and rucked up, showing a little strip of his bare yellow skin—some of the audience sniggered. But why had he taken off his braces? He would have done better to leave æsthetic considerations on one side. For now his trousers bothered him, they had bothered him during the whole fight. He kept wanting to pull them up and stuff in his shirt, for however much he was punished he could bear it better than the thought that he might be cutting a ridiculous figure. In the end he was fighting with one hand while with the other he tried to put himself to rights; and thus Jappe was able to land such a blow on his nose that to this day I do not understand why it was not broken.

But the blood poured out, and Do Escobar turned and went apart from Jappe, trying with his right hand to stop the bleeding and with his left making an eloquent gesture behind him as he went. Jappe stood there with his knock-kneed legs spread out and waited for Do Escobar to come back. But Do Escobar was finished

with the business. If I interpret him aright he was the more civilized of the two and felt that it was high time to call a halt. Jappe would beyond doubt have fought on with his nose bleeding; but almost as certainly Do Escobar would equally have refused to go on, and he did so with even more conviction in that it was himself that bled. They had made the claret run out of his nose—in his view things should never have been allowed to go so far, devil take it! The blood ran between his fingers onto his clothes, it soiled his light trousers and dripped on his yellow shoes. It was beastly and nothing but beastly—and under such circumstances he declined to take part in more fighting. It would be inhuman.

And his attitude was accepted by the majority of the spectators. Herr Knaak came into the ring and declared that the fight was over. Both sides had behaved with distinction. You could see how relieved he felt that the affair had gone off so smoothly.

"But neither of them was brought to a fall," said Johnny, surprised and disappointed. However, even Jappe was quite satisfied to consider the affair as settled. Drawing a long breath he went to fetch his clothes. Everybody generally accepted Herr Knaak's delicate fiction that the issue was a draw. Jappe was congratulated, but only surreptitiously; on the other hand some people lent Do Escobar their handkerchiefs, as his own was soon drenched. And now the cry was for more. Let two other fellows fight. That was the sense of the meeting; Jappe's and Do Escobar's business had taken so little time, hardly ten minutes; since they were all there and it was still quite early something more ought to come. Another pair must enter the arena—whoever wanted to show that he deserved being called a lad of parts.

Nobody offered. But why at this summons did my heart begin to beat like a little drum? What I had feared had come to pass: the challenge had become general. Why did I feel as though I had all the time been awaiting this very moment with shivers of delicious anticipation and now when it had come why was I plunged into a whirl of conflicting emotions? I looked at Johnny. Perfectly calm and detached he sat beside me, turned his straw about in his mouth and looked about the ring with a frankly curious air, to see whether a couple of stout chaps would not be found to let their noses be broken for his amusement. Why was it that I had to feel personally challenged to conquer my nervous timidity, to make an

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unnatural effort and draw all eyes upon myself by heroically stepping into the ring? In an access of self-consciousness mingled with vanity I was about to raise my hand and offer myself for combat when somewhere in the circle the shout arose :

"Herr Knaak ought to fight !"

All eyes fastened themselves upon Herr Knaak. I have said that he was walking upon slippery ice in exposing himself to the danger of such a test of his kidney. But he simply answered :

"No, thanks, very much—I had enough beatings when I was young."

He was safe. He had slipped like an eel out of the trap. How astute of him, to bring in his superiority in years, to imply that at our age he would not have avoided an honourable fight—and that without boasting at all, even making his words carry irresistible conviction by admitting with a disarming laugh at himself that he too had taken beatings in his time. They let him alone. They perceived that it was hard, if not impossible, to bring him to book.

"Then somebody must wrestle !" was the next cry. This suggestion was not taken up either; but in the midst of the discussion over it (and I shall never forget the painful impression it made) Do Escobar said in his hoarse Spanish voice from behind his gory handkerchief : "Wrestling is for cowards. Only Germans wrestle." It was an unheard-of piece of tactlessness, coming from him, and got its reward at once in the capital retort made by Herr Knaak : "Possibly," said he. "But it looks as though the Germans know how to give pretty good beatings sometimes too !" He was rewarded by shouts of approving laughter; his whole position was improved, and Do Escobar definitely put down for the day.

But it was the general opinion that wrestling was a good deal of a bore, and so various athletic feats were resorted to instead : leap-frog, standing on one's head, handsprings and so on, to fill in the time.

"Come on, let's go," said Johnny to Bratttöm and me, and got up. That was Johnny Bishop for you. He had come to see something real, with the possibility of a bloody issue. But the thing had petered out and so he left.

He gave me my first impression of the peculiar superiority of the English character, which later on I came so greatly to admire.